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AUTHOR	Estey, Nancy; MacIsaac, Maitland; Rendell, Sandra
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ABSTRACT

Based on the understanding that the capacity to learn is optimized in the early years, Early Learning Canada (ELC) is a community workshop program for parents and adults who work with children from birth to age 6 and their families to facilitate life-long learning. This workshop leader guide explains the ELC principles, examines learning styles and the teaching-learning process, offers suggestions for workshop preparation, and explains the experiencing learning cycle: briefing, learning activity, and debriefing. Each of the eight 2.5-hour workshops presented is organized so that the leader and participants share learning experiences and discuss a life management topic; the leader then introduces the topics and related learning activities and leads the experiencing learning cycle. The topics covered in each workshop include: (1) understanding learning, including the parents' role, multisensory learning, the role of play, and learning versus performance goals; (2) more about learning, including multiple intelligences, motivation, memory, learning styles, and developmental stages; (3) thinking processes, including observing, comparing and contrasting, identifying patterns, and predicting; (4) more about thinking processes, including labeling, categorizing, cause-effect relationships, sequencing, prioritizing, and making decisions; (5) language development, including communication and parents' role; (6) more about language development, including early listening, speaking, reading, and writing; (7) health and learning, including resources, influences, and values; and (8) a framework for learning (physical, environmental, social, emotional, neurological), focusing on factors affecting learning and understanding the world through inquiry, exploration, discovery, and making connections. Each workshop except the first also covers a life management topic such as eating, sleeping, relationships, child care, toilet learning, stress, self-esteem, television, and behavior guidance. A reading list of 45 references completes the guide. (KB)

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Early Learning Canada

Workshop Leader Guide
[and]
Participant Resource
[and]
Trainer Manual

Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System

PS 031 153

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Early Learning Canada

WORKSHOP LEADER GUIDE

LEARNING & READING PARTNERS ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

Early Learning Canada
Workshop Leader Guide

ISBN # 0-9685157-4-6

Early Learning Canada is a community workshop program designed for parents and adults who work with young children from birth to age 6 and their families. Its purpose is to facilitate lifelong learning. The program was developed during a 30-month project that began in October 1998; resources include a Participant Resource, a Workshop Leader Guide and a Train-the-Trainer Manual. During the project, 150 workshop leaders worked in pairs to deliver workshops in communities across Canada.

Partnering Organizations / Project Steering Committee:
Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs / Alla Ivask
Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists / Suzanne Fraser
Canadian Child Care Federation / Dianne Bascombe, Barbara Coyle (chair)
Learning Disabilities Association of Canada / Pauline Mantha
Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System / Maitland MacIsaac

CCCF Project Management Team:
Barbara Coyle, Xania Gordon, Robin Kealey

Authors:
Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System
Nancy Estey, Maitland MacIsaac, Sandra Rendell

Illustrator:
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Design:
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Karin Lynch, Judith Whitehead

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Advisors
Beth Allan
Heather Brown
Elaine Cairns
Kim Crockatt
Sharon Fotheringham
Mary Gallagher
Ann Gauvin
Chris Gay
Anne Joyce
Barbara Kaiser
Beverley Kirby
Linda Mace
Heather MacKenzie
Laureen Mackenzie
Elizabeth Mann
Cathy McCormack
Sue McCormack
Claire McNab
Keith Morgan
Trudy Norton
Marg Rodrigues
Mona Rowland
Janet Shively
Carolyn Simpson
Alice Taylor
Marilyn Goodyear Whiteley

Pilot Workshop Leaders
Joanne Boyd
Doreen Cowin
Lise Beauchemin-Crousette
Andrea Gingras
Robin Kealey
Vicki Laframboise
Caroline Landry
Karen Luker
Cathy McCormack
Anne Ricard
Brenda Rioux
Linda Mace

Prince Edward Island Literacy Alliance
Erin Casey
Dianne Morrow
Catherine O'Bryan

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The authors acknowledge that the Experiencing Learning Cycle evolved from the work of Dewey (1938), Kolb (1984) and Kennedy (1994).

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Important Information for Workshop Leaders

Early Learning Canada Principles

Early Learning Canada (ELC) demonstrates that children are continually learning and that participants have countless opportunities in daily life to provide positive learning experiences and to model effective learning behaviours.

The ELC program celebrates parenting and reflects the belief that parents are the greatest influence in their young children's lives.

Four ELC principles reflect the importance of parents in their children's learning. Introduce them during the first workshop and continue to reinforce them. By the end of the workshops, participants will be familiar with them. During your discussion, participants may share examples of how they apply to their own families.

Principle 1 – Parents have an essential role in their children's lifelong learning.

Principle 2 – Parents are the primary educators of their young children.

Principle 3 – Parents have the capacity to educate their young children – even if they don't always realize that they have this capacity.

Principle 4 – Parents are not alone as their young children's primary teacher. The whole community has responsibilities for raising children.

Parents as Educators

Participants in the ELC program have an obvious commitment to children. Some may be concerned that they do not know how to help children learn. However, they are likely already doing much of what is covered in the program. ELC has been designed to help raise awareness. Workshop leaders can assure them of the kind of learning that is taking place, how it is taking place, or its importance.

The workshops place everyday activities that participants do with children in a "learning about learning" context. This will help them to effectively enhance children's learning opportunities.

Learning Styles and the Teaching-Learning Process

People tend to teach the way they learn themselves. Many will have a different learning style from yours. You may need to adapt your approach accordingly.

Thinking Styles

People do not think and respond alike. It is helpful to think of two types – "reactive" and "reflective" thinkers. Reactive thinkers "do then think." They are quick to respond to questions or situations. They have a tendency to get things done first and reflect on them later. Reflective thinkers prefer to "think then do." They may appear to be slow in answering questions because they like to think about things before they respond.

When you ask a question, it is a good idea to establish a routine of allowing several seconds of "think time" before you expect an answer. Five or six seconds allow reflective thinkers to collect their thoughts so that they are not overshadowed by the more reactive thinkers. This practice also encourages the more reactive thinkers to take time to consider their answers before responding.

Teaching–Learning Process

The learning activities in each module use three different approaches, depending on the topics and the workshop activities. They also demonstrate the different ways that participants can interact with children during their learning activities.

Talk and Do – The workshop leader guides the group in interactive discussion (Talk) about the topics while the participants do the activity (Do). Talk and Do demonstrates the PAT model for learning – how participants can *Provide* learning opportunities, *Allow* the child to lead the learning through free exploration, and *Teach* through interactive discussion and modelling. **This approach is appropriate in many early learning situations.**

Do Then Talk – Participants do the activity (Do). Then the topics are discussed (Talk). Do Then Talk also demonstrates the PAT model. **This approach is also appropriate in many early learning situations.**

Talk Then Do – First, the topics are discussed (Talk). Then participants use their understanding of the topics as they do an activity (Do). Talk Then Do demonstrates direct teaching, followed by exploration or practice. **This approach is seldom appropriate in early learning, but is appropriate in situations where safety or frustration is an issue. This approach is often used for adult learners.**

Getting Ready

Before each workshop, make sure you have all the materials you need. You may want to make a checklist of materials for the activities, teaching aids and any other things you may need. Before the workshop, display where participants can easily see them:

- Welcome to ELC poster (provided)
- ELC principles poster (provided)
- PAT poster (provided)
- Experiencing Learning Cycle poster (provided)
- list of topics and learning activities for the workshop (not provided)

Read the Participant Resource so you will be able to discuss any questions or concerns that participants may have about the subject matter. Be sure to read the topics that are covered in your workshop.

Experiencing Learning Cycle

The Experiencing Learning Cycle presents the basic structure and format for presenting the topics in each module. You will lead the participants through a number of cycles in each module. It is important for workshop leaders and participants to understand how the cycle works. The cycle provides participants and workshop leaders with a consistent approach for presenting the learning activities and related topics for each workshop.

Your role is to guide participants in exploring the topics and doing the learning activity in each cycle in ways that are meaningful. If participants get "off track," you need to guide the discussion back to the selected topics.

Notes on Debriefing

Debriefing serves as an opportunity for the workshop leader to answer questions and ensure that participants:

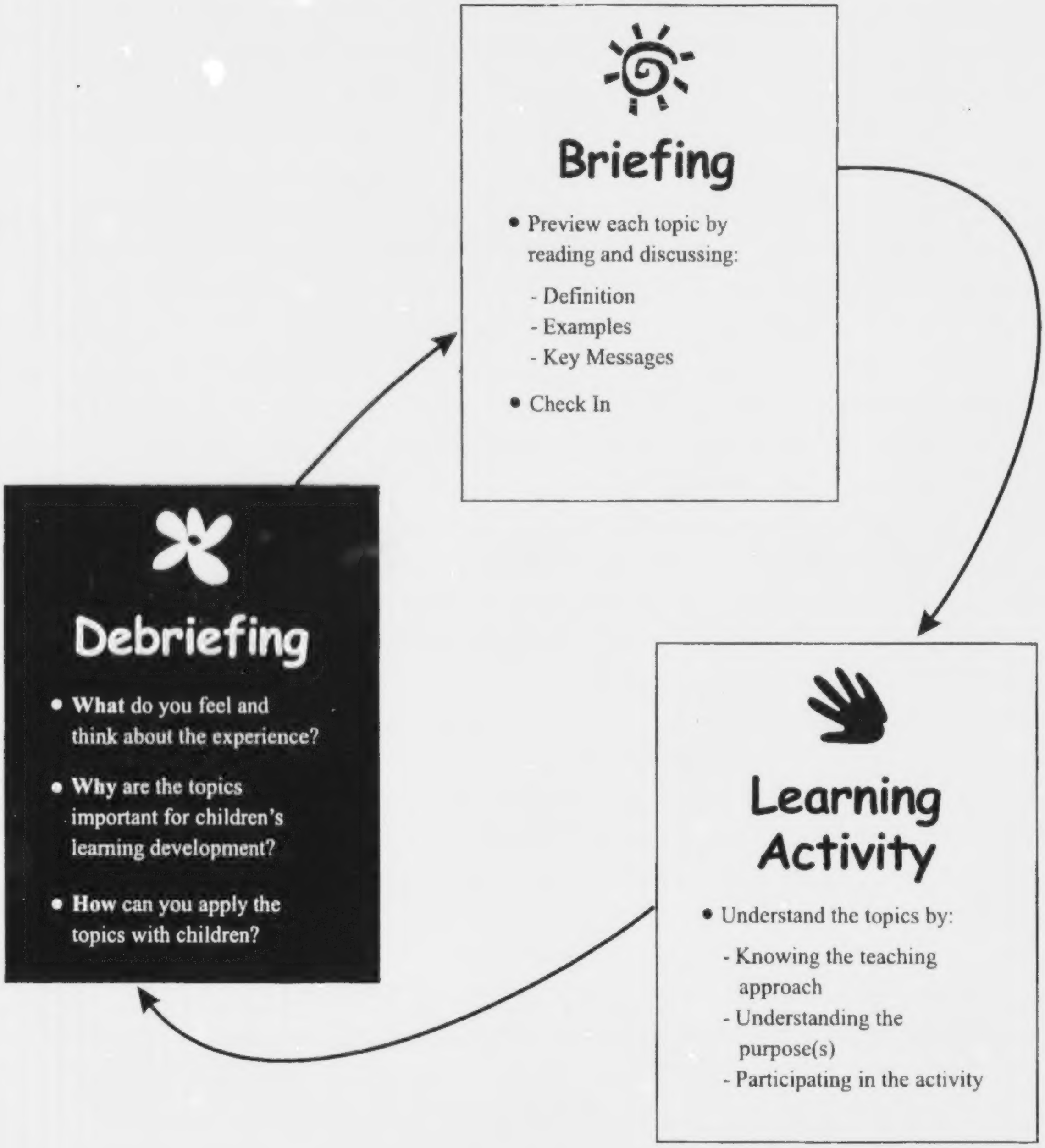
- make the link between the activity and the topic(s)
- understand the topic(s)
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

People remember best if they can make their own personal links between the new information and their own experiences and knowledge.

Have participants refer to the Experiencing Learning Cycle as you begin the debriefing process.

Debriefing – **What** do participants feel and think about the experience? Encourage participants to

Experiencing Learning Cycle



Briefing

- Preview each topic by reading and discussing:
  - Definition
  - Examples
  - Key Messages
- Check In

Learning Activity

- Understand the topics by:
  - Knowing the teaching approach
  - Understanding the purpose(s)
  - Participating in the activity

Debriefing

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

share their feelings and thoughts about the activities by prompting:

- What words would you use to describe how you felt as you participated in the activity (safe to take risks? nervous? frustrated? having fun? enthusiastic?)
- How did this activity help you to better understand your children?
- How did this activity fit with your prior knowledge about this topic?
- Talk about how this activity reminded you of situations with your children.

Debriefing – **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development? Invite discussion on why the topic is meaningful by prompting:

- Why is this topic important for children's learning?
- How will this topic affect how you interact with your children?
- What might you do differently as a result of this activity?

Debriefing – **How** can participants apply the topics with children?

- Invite participants to share ideas for future learning activities with their children by prompting: How can you use the topics we discussed as you interact with your children at home?
- What everyday events can you turn into learning opportunities for your children?

Time Frame

The workshops are designed to be presented in eight 2½-hour sessions. We suggest you give participants a 15-minute break sometime during the workshop.

Each workshop has a selected number of topics. However, you may not be able to cover them all in your session. You may need to adjust how many topics you do in a workshop. This will be a judgement call on your part, depending on the needs and interests of the group, and the relationship of the selected topics to each other and the workshop activities.

Keep in mind that while covering all the selected topics in the workshops is the ideal goal, the Participant Resource provides parents with further information on child development and learning.

Communicating with the Authors

Training support is available through Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System.

Phone/fax: (902) 628-8178
E-mail: lrpals@auracom.com

P.O. Box 1807
Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island
C1A 7N5

Introduce the Participant Resource

Explain how the Participant Resource is structured.

- Have participants turn to the "Contents" in the Participant Resource.
- Point out that the resource has eight modules, and each module has several topics.
- To demonstrate, you may wish to select Module One and read the topics.

Explain what is covered in each workshop.

- Each workshop covers selected topics from one of the eight modules in the Participant Resource.
- Participants can read the Participant Resource for more information and use it for future reference.

Point out that the material in the Participant Resource is presented consistently. The topics under each module include:

- Definition
- Examples
- Key messages
- Information about the topic
- How the topic affects children's lifelong learning
- Activities

Choose a few topics to show this format. Also, point out that there is space at the end of the Participant Resource for notes (page 171).

Introduce the Experiencing Learning Cycle

The Experiencing Learning Cycle presents the basic structure and format for presenting the topics and learning actitivies for each workshop. Tell participants that they will use this cycle for each activity. Explain that they will go through the cycle several times during each workshop, depending on the number of activities there are in the workshop.

The three main steps of the Experiencing Learning Cycle are:

- **Briefing**
  Preview each topic by reading and discussing the definition, examples and key messages. Check in before moving on to next step.
- **Learning Activity**
  Know the teaching approach and understand the purpose(s). Participate in the learning activity related to the topics.
- **Debriefing**
  Lead a discussion on the **What? Why?** and **How?** parts of Debriefing
  - **What** do you think and feel about the experience?
  - **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
  - **How** can you apply the topics with children?

1

Share Learning Experiences

Introduce the Early Learning Canada principles. The following prompts may be useful:

- What skills does your child need to become a lifelong learner? (All the topics in the ELC program are about giving children lifelong learning skills.)
- What have you taught your children? How did you teach them? (The ELC program helps participants become more aware of how they are helping their children to learn and will provide strategies to do it more effectively.)
- What are all the things you are doing well as you raise your child? (Participants may not always realize that they have this capacity.)
- What does the African proverb "It takes a whole village to raise a child" mean to you? (Children need supportive social settings and communities to grow to their full potential.) What community resources do you and your children already have?

2

Discuss Life Management Topic

Explain that a life management topic will be selected from the back of the Participant Resource (page 147) for an informal discussion in the next seven workshops. Because of time, a life management topic will not be used in Workshop One.

3

Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

Explain that doing the hands-on learning activities will bring the topics to life.

This week's topics and learning activities are:

CYCLE #1
Topic 1: PAT
Topic 2: TALK
Learning Activity – *Shoe Box Fun*

CYCLE #2
Topic 3: Multisensory Learning
Topic 4: Role of Play in Learning
Learning Activity – *Shoe Box Senses*

CYCLE #3
Topic 5: Learning Goals vs. Performance Goals
Learning Activity – *Making Flowers*

4

Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

In this step, you will take the participants through the Experiencing Learning Cycle three times. To help you do this, the three stages are graphically identified both here and on the Experiencing Learning Cycle poster.

BRIEFING | LEARNING ACTIVITY | DEBRIEFING

1

BRIEFING

TOPIC 1

PAT

(page 7, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What was one thing you did within the past week that fits this definition?

Examples: What example have you had from your own experiences?

Key Messages: Encourage discussion about learning that takes place in school and at home. (Learning at home or in other non-structured environments tends to fit more naturally within the PAT framework. Parents encourage and support learning rather than give "lessons.")

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 2

TALK

(page 10, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What activity have you done with your children in the last few days? (This activity probably involved the essential components used in learning. These components can be put together in a framework called TALK.)

Thinking – Have participants go to the list of topics in "Process of Thinking" (Module Three) and "More About Process of Thinking" (Module Four) of the Participant Resource, and to pick one or two topics they have used when doing an activity with their children.

Attitude – What were their children's attitudes while they were doing the activity?

Language – What were some of the words that were used (children's vocabulary development) while doing the activity with their children.

Knowledge – What things did their children already know about the activity (prior knowledge)?

Participants may think that very young children are not learning, when in fact they are learning a great deal by interacting with them.

Examples: When have you used TALK?

Key Messages: How do the key messages fit into your view of learning?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Shoe Box Fun

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants explore materials, then discuss the topics.

Purpose

- to demonstrate that everyday objects can become learning materials
- to experience the PAT model

Materials

Participant Resource, Topic 2,
"TALK, Key messages," page 11
3 different shoe boxes (Box A, B, C)

Prepare three shoe boxes (see below).

Activity

Break participants into three groups. Ask one participant in each group to be the "parent." The others will be "children."

Provide one shoe box to each group.
Allow those playing the role of "children" to lead the learning. They may explore the materials in any way they wish for up to 10 minutes. Those playing the role of "parent" do what they would normally do as parents.

Teach. At the end of the 10 minutes, discuss PAT. (Explain that you would never allow a child just 10 minutes to play. However, this is an artificial situation with tight time limits.) Ask the "parents" how much they wanted to direct the learning. Ask the "children" if they felt the "parent" interfered too much.

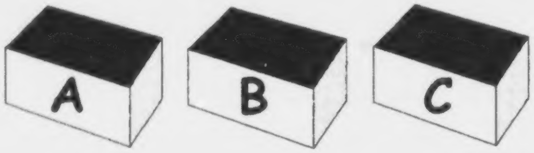
Have participants turn to "TALK, Key messages" from the Participant Resource. Lead a discussion about how each of the TALK components was used during this activity.

- Ask participants what ***Thinking*** processes they used. Have them turn to "Process of Thinking" on the "Contents" page of the Participant Resource and see how many they applied.
- Ask participants how their ***Attitude*** about the activity affected their learning. If someone thought "it was a silly activity" or felt pressured or uncomfortable during the activity, would it affect their participation and willingness to learn?
- Ask participants how they used ***Language***. Did they speak? listen? read? write? Was this important to their learning about the topic?
- Ask participants what prior ***Knowledge*** they used. Did they have prior knowledge of the materials and how they could be used? Were they using prior knowledge about their children as they did the activity?

- coloured sponge pieces
- cotton balls
- sugar
- masking tape
- bar of soap
- paper scraps
- a glove
- yarn
- sandpaper
- wooden spoon
- popsicle sticks
- a rock
- coloured markers
- comb

- coloured wood blocks
- cotton swabs
- salt
- transparent tape
- dryer sheet
- fabric scraps
- a mitt
- ribbon
- emery board
- plastic spoon
- stir sticks
- smooth stones
- coloured pencils
- hair brush

- foam pieces
- band-aid
- pepper
- stickers
- scented candle
- tooth picks
- a sock
- elastic bands
- nail brush
- metal spoon
- staws
- gravel
- coloured crayons
- wash cloth



DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

2

BRIEFING

TOPIC 3

Multisensory Learning

(page 13, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What activity have you done with your children that used all their senses?

Examples: Ask participants to think again about the activity now that they have more information. How many of the senses are used without consciously thinking about them?

Key Messages: How do your children seem to learn? Describe your child's learning? Write the senses that were used on a board or flipchart.

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BRIEFING

TOPIC 4

Role of Play in Learning

(page 15, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Think about a typical day in your children's life. How do they seem to learn? Do you plan your children's play? In what situations do they seem to learn best? List the answers. Many will reflect situations in which children "have fun" or play while learning.

Examples: What activity have you done recently with your children in which they were obviously learning while playing?

Key Messages: Why do many people think children's play is not important? What favourite thing do you do for recreation? How much time is spent improving your skills at this activity? Is learning taking place? This is what children do all the time as they play.

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Shoe Box Senses

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants explore materials, then discuss the topics.

Purpose

- to experience multisensory learning
- to emphasize the importance of play in learning

Materials
Use the same three shoe boxes (A, B and C) that were used in the previous learning activity "Shoe Box Fun." Be sure each group gets a different box than they used during the previous activity.

Activity
Break participants into the same three groups they were in for "Shoe Box Fun." Have participants explore the items for a minute or so. Then ask them to recall what multisensory learning is. Ask them which senses they used as they explored the items. Participants will probably say they were using touch and sight.

Ask how their children would approach the task. Would children naturally use more senses? Remind them that the more senses we use, the more we learn. What other senses could they use to learn more about the materials? Discuss. Remind participants that you, the adult, let them play and make their own learning choices. Emphasize the importance of play in young children's learning.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

BRIEFING

TOPIC 5

Learning Goals vs. Performance Goals

(page 17, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some things children are learning when they learn to tie their shoe laces? (The performance goal was to tie the laces, but much more has been accomplished during the process.)

Examples: What learning goals are your children focusing on now?

Key Messages: Can you remember when you have stressed performance goals rather than learning goals?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Making Flowers

Teaching Approach: Talk then Do
Participants discuss the topic, Then explore materials.

Purpose

- to emphasize the difference between learning goals and performance goals

Materials

- Participant Resource, Topic 5, "About learning goals vs. performance goals" and "How do learning goals vs. performance goals affect children's lifelong learning?," pages 17 to 19.

Use the same three shoe boxes (A, B and C) that were used in the previous learning activity "Shoe Box Fun." Be sure each group gets a different box than they used during the previous activity.

Activity

Ask participants to read "About learning goals vs. performance goals" and "How do learning goals vs. performance goals affect children's lifelong learning?" (The preschool years: birth – 5) of the Participant Resource. Ask whether they focused on learning goals or performance goals during the activities that have taken place. Point out that they were allowed to play, enjoy, explore, create and learn what was important to them without measuring up to someone else's expectation. These activities focused on learning goals. Quickly review how much learning occurred. This activity emphasizes the difference between learning goals and performance goals.

Divide the participants into the same three groups as for the two previous activities. Ask one participant in each group to be a "parent" and the others to be "children." Provide each group with a shoe box. The "parent" has the "children" use their materials to make a flower to the parent's specifications (for example, a long stem, 3 leaves, 1 bloom). At the end of a couple of minutes, ask each group to report what is happening and why.

In this activity, "parents" have set the performance goal of making a flower to their expectations. Some learning may have been sacrificed because the children's creativity was limited by the boundaries of the performance goal.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

5

Make the Most of the Participant Resource

During most of the workshop, participants learn by doing the activities rather than by reading the information in the Participant Resource. Based on your own preference and that of the group, choose a topic from this workshop to explore further in the Participant Resource. Turn to the section and lead an informal discussion. Repeat for other topics if you have the time.

Encourage parents to use the Participant Resource at home to:
- review the topics
- get more information
- get ideas for learning activities with children
- share their new knowledge with friends

Early Learning Canada

PARTICIPANT RESOURCE

LEARNING & READING PARTNERS ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

Contents

This resource is for anyone who works with and cares for young children. The word "parent" is inclusive of all those who contribute to the development and lifelong learning of children.

Introduction **3**

Module One – Understanding Learning **5**
Topic 1: PAT 7
Topic 2: TALK 10
Topic 3: Multisensory Learning 13
Topic 4: Role of Play in Learning 15
Topic 5: Learning Goals vs. Performance Goals 17

Module Two – More About Understanding Learning **21**
Topic 6: Multiple Intelligences 23
Topic 7: Motivation 27
Topic 8: Ways of Remembering 30
Topic 9: Learning Styles 33
Topic 10: Developmental Stages of Learning 35

Module Three – Process of Thinking **39**
Topic 11: Observe 41
Topic 12: Compare and Contrast 43
Topic 13: Pattern 45
Topic 14: Predict 47
Topic 15: Main Idea 49
Topic 16: Understanding Pictures 51
Topic 17: Real and Pretend 53

Module Four – More About Process of Thinking **55**
Topic 18: Label 57
Topic 19: Categorize 59
Topic 20: Cause and Effect 61
Topic 21: Sequence 63
Topic 22: Prioritize 65
Topic 23: Fact and Opinion 67
Topic 24: Making Decisions 69

Module Five – Language Development ... **71**
Topic 25: Communication ... 73
Topic 26: Important Factors ... 75
Topic 27: How Language Develops ... 79
Topic 28: Parents' Role in Language Development ... 83
Topic 29: Connecting with Children ... 87

Module Six – More About Language Development ... **91**
Topic 30: Early Listening and Speaking ... 93
Topic 31: Early Reading ... 96
Topic 32: Early Writing ... 99
Topic 33: Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development ... 103

Module Seven – Health and Learning ... **107**
Topic 34: Health Resources ... 109
Topic 35: Health Influencers ... 112
Topic 36: Health Populations ... 115
Topic 37: Values ... 117
Topic 38: Health Strategies ... 120

Module Eight – A Framework for Learning ... **123**
Factors that affect learning ... 125
Topic 39: Physical Factors ... 125
Topic 40: Environmental Factors ... 128
Topic 41: Social Factors ... 130
Topic 42: Emotional Factors ... 132
Topic 43: Neurological Factors ... 135
Understanding the world ... 138
Topic 44: Inquiry ... 138
Topic 45: Exploration ... 140
Topic 46: Discovery ... 142
Topic 47: Making Connections ... 144

Life Management ... **147**
Eating ... 149
Sleeping ... 151
Relationships ... 153
Learning Outside the Home ... 155
Child Care ... 157
Learning to Use the Toilet ... 159
Stress ... 161
Self-Esteem ... 163
Television ... 165
Behaviour Guidance ... 167

Reading List ... **169**
Notes ... **171**

Introduction to Early Learning Canada

One hundred years from now let us be remembered, not so much for our advances in technology, but rather, that in the last years of the 20th century, we made decisions to treasure the mind of every young child.

— Maitland MacIsaac, Executive Director
Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System, May 1999

Early Learning Canada is based on the understanding that the capacity to learn is optimized in the early years of life. The brain is constantly searching for meaning, experiences, ways to relate to and understand the world.

To do this most effectively requires interaction with others – both children and adults. All society has a responsibility to practise the African proverb "It takes a whole village to raise a child." One way is for the community to have programs available that give them information and strategies to assist children to become successful lifelong learners. Early Learning Canada is such a program.

Early Learning Canada is based on the following principles:
- Parents have an essential role in their children's lifelong learning.
- Parents are the primary educators of their young children.
- Parents have the capacity to educate their young children.
- Parents are not alone as their children's primary teacher, because the whole community has responsibilities for raising children.

Upon completing Early Learning Canada, participants will:
- understand how children "learn how to learn"
- have strategies to help children become effective thinkers
- have strategies to help children develop their language
- have a framework for learning that links early learning and learning for life
- have strategies to interact with children to maximize learning.

Early Learning Canada is designed to be:
- for ALL parents and those who have a role in the lives of young children
- fun for children, parents and others who interact with children
- informative and easy to follow
- a time to share with others about young children's learning
- a chance to open doors to possibilities for young children's learning.

After completing Early Learning Canada, you'll be more empowered to help children learn for life.

MODULE ONE

Understanding Learning

Christine Tripp

Introduction

While every child is an individual, children also have many similarities in what they need to grow and thrive. The information and activities in the **Understanding Learning** module are designed to provide you with the "big picture" of how all children learn and what you can do to enhance your own child's learning.

This section demonstrates how young children learn best and provides you with an easy-to-remember model of your essential role in encouraging and enhancing your child's eagerness to learn.

Understanding how your child learns will allow you to see the world through your child's eyes, and you will be alert to the endless learning opportunities you can provide through everyday activities.

Understanding Learning Topics

Topic 1: PAT
Topic 2: TALK
Topic 3: Multisensory Learning
Topic 4: Role of Play in Learning
Topic 5: Learning Goals vs. Performance Goals

TOPIC 1

PAT: Provide, Allow, Teach

Definition

PAT stands for the role that parents have in helping children to learn.

P *Provide* opportunities for children to learn.

A *Allow* children to lead by letting the learning happen naturally.

T *Teach* by modelling and direct instruction.

Example

- Provide a basin of water and a variety of objects such as a rubber ball, a straw, cups and bowls.
- Allow the child to pour and play, to blow bubbles, to explore, to discover.
- Teach by sharing the child's excitement about his explorations. Talk with him and give him the words he needs for the concepts he has discovered – "The ball floats." "The spoon sinks." "Bubbles are made of air."

Key messages

- PAT is an easy-to-remember tool for helping young children with learning.
- PAT gives you an understanding of how young children learn best.

About PAT

We often interact with our children in the same way that we were taught. While there are exceptions, we generally assume that helping children learn means doing what we remember our parents and teachers doing. But early childhood is a time for a special kind of learning. It is a time of first experiences and learning how to make connections.

Much of the time, our role is not to instruct but to provide opportunities for children to do what comes naturally – learn on their own. Of course, there are times when we must actively teach. Think of the many things – from tying shoes to learning about poison ivy – that children have difficulty "discovering" on their own.

How does PAT affect children's lifelong learning?

By following PAT, you help children acquire many kinds of knowledge that will be the foundations of their future learning. You are encouraging a love of learning and a positive attitude. And you are providing children with a process and a model for future independent learning.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

P – Provide learning opportunities
Something as simple as a trip to a store can provide a stimulating learning environment. When you think of play for yourself, you may think of meeting a friend for coffee, playing cards or sitting in the park. But, when children "play," they are learning. Playing and interacting with children helps them to learn, and learn how to learn. Take advantage of opportunities. When a child hands you a leaf, extend the learning by making the leaf a starting point to explore colour, shape, texture and imagination.

A – Allow the child to lead the learning
Young children are explorers. They like to choose their own areas to explore. Young children may also have short attention spans. They probably like to spend a short time on one thing and then move on to something else. Often, children have no interest in learning what adults want them to learn.

Remember that children are learning all the time. Usually, it's not learning specific things that's important – it's learning how to learn about all things. Watch children as they learn.

T – Teach the child directly and by modelling
Children learn so much from the adults around them. They learn about relationships, behaviour, people, places and things. Children watch adults' behaviour and imitate them. Children also learn when adults teach them directly. Most of the time, learning takes place through modelling. A child watches mom, dad or big brother put on socks, talk to others, use a tool, read, watch TV, smile, raise their voice. In each and every case, the adult is modelling what to do in different situations – and often does not know how powerful this unconscious modelling is. Children use parents and other important people as their filter to understand the world and their place in it.

Here are a few ways to use PAT.

Provide

You are a wonderful resource for your child. Often, a hug or a sit on your lap starts a conversation.

There are many simple things that will delight and inspire your child to explore and create. Sand and water are always fun, old socks make great puppets, cardboard boxes can become trains or tractors. Water play is the best free fun going. Give your child some things that float, sink or dissolve, some bubble bath, funnels, cups or straws and you have a science lab in your bathroom!

Doing something as simple as inviting a small friend to your home provides your child with the opportunity to play, develop language, learn social skills and develop self-esteem.

Allow

Let your child try, try and try again. We don't learn how to do most things on the first try. It's a process of trial and error.

Letting your children do things for themselves will make their learning easier. When you do things for children that they could be learning to do for themselves, you take away the opportunity for them to take risks, learn how to do things and develop competency. However, common sense has to be the order of the day. If your child is ever frustrated or in a dangerous situation, step in and offer guidance.

Allowing your child to be the learning leader encourages her to connect with people. Young children don't need a continuous adult presence. They benefit from a lot of short spurts. Each spurt is a connection that builds self-confidence and a feeling of self-worth.

We know that time is precious and sometimes you may feel you have to "do something" with your child. Actually, your job is mostly to let your child tell you how she wants to learn. Let her take the lead and go with the flow!

Teach

Children often give you chances to extend learning. When a child points and says "Bird!" you can stretch the learning by adding more words: "The bird is flying." Children ask tons of questions. It's their job. They are researching the world and you are the encyclopedia. It's tough to be mom or dad when you're busy with other things. It's important, however, to take a deep breath and answer those questions.

TOPIC 2

TALK: Thinking, Attitude, Language and Knowledge

Definition

Thinking, attitude, language and knowledge are the four essential learning processes people use to understand the world.

Thinking
Attitude
Language
Knowledge

Examples

If you want to put together a piece of unfinished furniture like a crib, you need to:

T *Think* (understand the picture or diagram to see how the finished crib will look, categorize and label the pieces (legs, screws, brackets), compare the pieces with the diagram, follow a sequence to put the pieces together, and decide if you are satisfied with the finished crib).

A Have a positive *attitude* (even if the assembly is difficult).

L Use *language* (to read the directions, to listen and speak with someone helping you).

K Use *knowledge* (what you already know) about cribs, using tools and following instructions.

Key messages

Learning is the constant interaction of the four processes. All learning and problem solving depends on TALK.

Thinking: People use critical and creative thinking strategies as they learn.

Attitude: Attitudes about learning and the values people place on particular knowledge affects how they learn.

Language: We need language to:
- communicate
- think
- acquire knowledge

Knowledge: When we learn, we use our prior knowledge to understand new knowledge.

Using these learning processes as you work and play with children will help them to be better learners.

About TALK

The more we know about and use TALK, the more effectively we can learn.

Thinking

Being more aware of our thinking makes us better learners and decision makers.

Attitude

What a difference our attitude makes when we have an opportunity to learn! When we are positive and motivated, we are more successful. If we feel negative, we may not even begin.

Language

We use language to communicate. We use language in four ways: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Knowledge

Have you ever tried to describe an object to a friend who has never seen it before? You'll likely compare this object to something your friend already knows about – you use your friend's prior knowledge.

Young children are discovering how to learn. They have to figure out what thinking, attitude, language and knowledge are all about. They learn how to use each one, and put them together. They need to make mistakes, communicate messages, understand themselves, learn how to walk, learn how to act – all from scratch! Quite a job for the first years of life.

Children learn most of the skills and strategies that relate to TALK before they are about 6 years of age. This is why those who work with young children need to provide an environment where the fundamental learning processes used throughout life can be learned. What you do with a child during the early years sets the course for life.

How does TALK affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5

The preschool years are the time when the "grand rivers of the mind" are forming. Thinking, attitude, language and knowledge are constantly fed from the streams of experience. The grand learning rivers supply what your child needs to learn, to transfer knowledge from place to place, and to create new ideas.

The school years: 6 – 12

The child is now a trained explorer with the equipment and maps needed to discover new people, places and things. The mind is keen to use all those new learning skills. It's time to venture outside the home to learn more about the bigger world.

Adolescence: 13 – 18

During the teen years, the rivers change course. Now, the goal is for teens to discover themselves and others. Young people are learning to manage interpersonal and close relationships outside the family. The social focus shifts from family to friends.

Adulthood

Throughout life, adults use thinking, attitude, language and prior knowledge to understand new knowledge.

ACTIVITY for parents

TALK

You are visiting a friend and your 2-year-old starts to explore the living room. You closely watch your child. You begin to *think*, "I wonder what's going to happen." But your friend says, "Don't worry." You know her well. You decide to sit back and have a relaxed *attitude*, too. You then start chatting about children, using *language* to share a newspaper article about child behaviour and what it's like to care for a 2-year-old. She shares some of her experiences when she was employed as a child care provider. You both share your prior *knowledge*.

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TOPIC 3

Multisensory Learning

Definition

Multisensory learning uses all the senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste to help with learning.

Examples

- If we want to learn about a dairy farm, the best way is to visit one and *see* the cows and the milking machines, *hear* the cows mooing and the sounds of the machinery, *smell* the hay and the manure, *touch* the cows and the hay, and *taste* the processed milk products (pasteurized milk, cheese, yogurt).

- If we want to learn about flowers, the best way is to see, smell and touch them.

- If we want to know about water, we look at it, splash it, pour it, drink it, and maybe even swim in it.

Key messages

- It is important to provide young learners with opportunities for multisensory experiences.
- The more senses we use, the better we learn.

About multisensory learning

Everything we know is learned by using our five senses. During the first 5 years, a lot of what children experience is new. A child will touch a cat, see a flower, smell a skunk, and hear a fire truck – all for the first time. These sensory experiences become prior knowledge that helps a child to learn even more new things.

The more senses we use, the easier it is to remember things. Our brains are wired to learn through sensory experiences. Second-hand learning, for example through TV, does not substitute for the real thing.

The more senses we use, the greater the learning. We have become more dependent on sight and hearing because of print, radio and TV. Much of daily life involves reading and hearing. In schools, subjects like science and social studies are often learned by reading a book, not by experiencing the real thing. Reading or hearing about experiences is usually not as efficient a way to learn as being involved in the experience. People often remember a great deal more of what they experience (Jensen, 1996).

The message is clear. Children who participate in a variety of experiences using all their senses are getting a head start in lifelong learning.

How does multisensory learning affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5
Children pick up all the sights, sounds, smells, touches and tastes they can, getting as much information as possible every waking moment.

The school years: 6 – 12
The brain takes the zillions of things learned in the first 5 years and begins to use them in abstract ways. If children have had lots of multisensory experiences, they will have first-hand knowledge about many things in the world. They can now use this prior knowledge to understand and make connections by reading about things. However, what they understand when reading depends very much on what they have already experienced about the subject.

Adolescence: 13 – 18
Multisensory experiences take on new meaning as teens become focused on peers. Relationships are the focus of an adolescent's life.

Adulthood
Humans are designed to learn experientially, but adults can also think in abstract terms. They can read books, hear conversations, use computers. However, most things learned in the mind are rooted in the senses. Much of the new knowledge about the world comes through the senses.

ACTIVITIES for parents

Trying a new fruit or vegetable

Go to a store and choose a fruit or vegetable you've never eaten before. Take it home and examine it, using all your senses. Think of some words that describe how it looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes. For example, the fruit may be soft, squishy, pebbly, hard or fuzzy. Ask someone to share the experience with you. You might feel a bit silly, but you'll learn things about how children process their world – and about how you process yours.

I've got a funny feeling

Put an object in a "feely" bag. Have a child put her hand into the bag and try to identify the object by touch alone.

Try testing "sight" by showing a picture of part of an object and asking a friend to figure out what it is. See how hard it can be to get information when we are limited to only one sense.

What does food sound like?

List the five senses. When you make your next meal, put a check beside the senses you use as you cook. Did you use them all? Would you still be able to make the meal if you couldn't use one of your senses? Which one do you think you could most easily do without?

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TOPIC 4

Role of Play in Learning

Definition

Play has many different meanings. Here, it is defined as learning through pleasurable activities.

Example

- An infant plays with his toes.
- A child feeds her doll and burps it.
- An older child plays school with a little brother.
- A 5-year-old helps with household chores, cooking and other grown-up activities.

Key messages

- **Although many adults tend to think of play as "wasting time," play is essential to a young child's learning.**
- **We are motivated to do what we enjoy and we learn most effectively when we are doing what we enjoy.**

About play

There are many forms of play. Anything we choose to do because it gives us pleasure can be considered play. This varies from person to person. For some people, bungee jumping is great fun – some of us couldn't even watch! Some people play hockey for fun, some read a book, while others watch TV, paint, sew, garden or play games.

Various types of play satisfy our needs to have fun, be free (from work and daily worries), belong (to a team or partner) and have control (accomplishment and mastery of a skill). Our own personal interests determine what is fun for each of us. If we are interested, we are motivated to learn about that topic.

Have you noticed how much people learn about their chosen hobby or sport? Think of people who garden. They know about plants, soil conditions, planting times, watering and fertilizing. In the process of doing what they enjoy, they become experts. Similarly, skiers or snowboarders develop an expert knowledge of snow conditions, safety, spatial and body awareness. All this learning happens while the person is playing.

Children **must** play to learn. Through play, children try out new roles and ways of acting, learn and practise new skills and processes, and internalize new experiences and ways of feeling. Children might learn to dress themselves by dressing a doll. Young children are totally involved in their world of play. When children are fully engaged and concentrating on a play activity, the greatest, easiest and most intense learning takes place.

How does play affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5
Babies play with their fingers and toes, with crib toys, etc. Toddlers play in their own world: even with other children, their play is often "parallel" or side by side, rather than with each other.

The school years: 6 – 12
School-age children play in groups. They begin to play games with rules. Play becomes a way of interacting with others and learning important social skills.

Adolescence: 13 – 18
Many of an adolescent's "play" activities involve both physical and social skills. Adolescents also play at adult relationships. Issues of peer group acceptance are the serious business of play. Sometimes, teens seem so serious that you might think they have lost interest in playing, but their play has just changed to include experimenting with adult roles and activities.

Adulthood
Adults tend to view play as an escape from routine, a way to relax and "de-stress" from the world. Important learning often takes place as they pursue their interests.

ACTIVITY for parents

Grown-up play

Think about your own favourite way to "play." Is it gardening, dancing, listening to music, playing or watching a sport? List the knowledge, skills and experience that you have gained from playing in this way. Is your favourite play activity something you do alone or with others? Some play is social, some is solitary. We learn from both.

Now think about your child. How does he relax or have fun? Does he like to have his friends over, play in the tub or build with blocks?

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TOPIC 5

Learning Goals vs. Performance Goals

Definition

- A learning goal focuses on the **process** of acquiring or learning a skill.
- A performance goal focuses on the **product** of acquiring or learning a skill.

Examples

- You want to improve your back stroke. You must learn to move your arms and legs more efficiently. That's a learning goal.
- You want to swim 30 laps of the pool in 20 minutes. That's a performance goal.
- You want to cook healthier meals. You need to know the principles of nutrition. That's a learning goal.
- You master the concepts in your textbook so you can pass your chemistry exam. That's a performance goal.

Key messages

- There is a difference between learning and performance goals.
- We sometimes set performance goals for ourselves or for our children that interfere with learning.

About learning goals vs. performance goals

We want our children to be the best they can be. We may feel that a child's performance reflects on us. Sometimes, this leads to unrealistic expectations. When a child has trouble learning, she may not be developmentally ready – physically or intellectually. By focusing on learning goals instead of performance goals, you help children gain self-esteem.

When you were a child, did your parents ever say to you, "We want to see an 'A' in math on the next report card?" Have you ever said to yourself, "I will lose 10 pounds by next month?" Those are performance goals. The emphasis is on the result, not on how to get there or what you can learn along the way. The only measure of success is achieving the goal. The child who feels he must earn an "A" might memorize facts instead of trying to understand concepts.

This doesn't mean we shouldn't try to improve ourselves or achieve our goals. But focusing on a learning goal often helps us do this even more successfully.

Instead of insisting on an "A" in reading and writing, we can guide children on a language journey by reading together, talking about books, sharing experiences, writing about them, and playing word games. Your child has a better chance of getting that "A" in reading and writing for life, and will truly enjoy the experience of these activities for himself.

A child who is faced with unrealistic expectations may become a perfectionist and be dissatisfied with himself if he can't live up to performance goals. He may believe he must be "perfect" or "best." He may have a real fear of failure and be afraid to take any kind of learning risk. Knowing he can't be perfect in an unfamiliar situation, he might refuse to try or become frustrated very quickly. He misses the chance to learn from his mistakes, and therefore learning is limited.

Focusing on learning goals rather than performance goals is especially important for parents of young children. Setting performance goals can make us forget about the important learning that is taking place all the time. For example, the mother who sets a "potty performance" goal may find that she is frustrated and her child stressed. This is true for all of us, but for a young child, the journey toward the goal is the most important part.

ACTIVITY for parents

Thinking about learning and performance goals

Think of a time when you set an unrealistic performance goal for yourself, like...

- I will not get upset with the kids today.
- I will have the dinner dishes all cleaned up before I put the kids to bed.
- I will read the whole newspaper every day.

Did you reach your goal? Do you think you would have learned more and had a more satisfying experience if you had set learning goals like...

- I will try to understand why I feel so out of control when the kids...
- I will look at ways to organize dinnertime so that I'm not so stressed for time.
- I will scan the newspaper for articles that are interesting and relevant to me and my family.

Can you think of a time when you took a course, learned something new or acquired a new skill because you were interested in it?

Was the process or the product more important to you? What did you learn about yourself?

How do learning goals vs. performance goals affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5

The learning process is in high gear. The child is naturally motivated to learn as much as she can, as fast as she can. Setting performance goals – realistic or unrealistic – is not only unnecessary, it can put stress on the child. Pressure to perform does not make a child want to learn. A pressured child may balk or withdraw, or become so anxious that she is afraid to try new things for fear of failure.

Children who are allowed to lead their own learning will naturally choose and move toward achievable learning goals. The adults' role is to **P**rovide opportunities, materials and experiences; **A**llow the child to lead and learn from doing; and be a good model and **T**each when the child needs assistance (PAT – see page 7).

The school years: 6 – 12

When children start school, the pressure to perform to other people's expectations becomes a real issue. Children are very sensitive to being compared with others. Self-esteem and motivation can be damaged if they feel they are failing to "measure up." Continue to focus on the process of learning and nurture your child's special intelligences at home (see Topic 6 in Module Two).

Encourage enthusiasm – children will learn what they care about. Children in the same classroom may be at different developmental stages. An age difference of only months can be very significant developmentally.

Adolescence: 13 – 18

Adolescents face great pressure to perform. They must deal with academic and social performance goals. Some goals are unrealistic and therefore stressful – for example, being popular, looking like a model, being cool. Perhaps now, more than at any other time, they need you to help them focus on the learning process they are going through – even though they seem independent and not too interested in you.

Adulthood

Adults who have had the opportunity to focus on learning goals will be lifelong explorers who learn for the sake of learning and the satisfaction it brings. They will naturally foster meaningful learning for others.

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1

Share Learning Experiences

Invite participants to share some things that have happened with their children over the past week. How were these things learning experiences?

As participants share, make connections between these experiences and the topics you have discussed. By framing these experiences within a learning context, participants will see that they don't have to be teachers in a school set up at home. They just need to be aware of – and take advantage of – all natural opportunities for learning. Point out that participants are giving their children enriched learning every day.

Explore the enriched learning that is taking place every day:

- What did your child seem to be learning on his own?
- What do you think your child is learning from you?
- What are you learning from your child?
- How are you using PAT in your everyday activities?

2

Discuss Life Management Topic

Turn to the life management section at the back of the Participant Resource (page 147) and choose one topic. Lead an informal discussion.

Space is provided below for you to prepare several questions to get participants talking and to help you keep the discussion on track.

Life Management Topic ____________________

Questions ____________________

____

____

3

Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

Explain that doing the hands-on learning activities will bring the topics to life.

This week's topics and learning activities are:

CYCLE #1
Topic 6: Multiple Intelligences
Topic 7: Motivation
Topic 8: Ways of Remembering
Topic 9: Learning Styles
Learning Activity – *Making Music*

CYCLE #2
Topic 10: Developmental Stages of Learning
Learning Activity – *Developmental Stages*

4

Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

In this step, you will take the participants through the Experiencing Learning Cycle two times. To help you do this, the three stages are graphically identified both here and on the Experiencing Learning Cycle poster.

BRIEFING | LEARNING ACTIVITY | DEBRIEFING

1

BRIEFING

TOPIC 6

Multiple Intelligences

(page 23, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some things you do well?

Examples: The examples show that there are different kinds of intelligences.

Key Messages: Why it is important to recognize and value different kinds of intelligences?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 7

Motivation

(page 27, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Where does this "drive" come from?

Examples: What do you do or participate in because you really want to do it?

Key Messages: Do these key messages fit with your own experiences with your children and others?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 8

Ways of Remembering

(page 30, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What is something that comes to mind quickly that you remember very well?

Examples: Can you tell in which way you remember the example you just gave? (Participants will likely find that their memories are associated with experiential or contextual learning.)

Key Messages: What strategies do you use to help children remember things?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 9

Learning Styles

(page 33, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What ways have you experienced being "smart?"

Examples: Do these examples remind you of anyone you know?

Key Messages: Have you ever tried to teach your tactile and kinesthetic child by talking to her (for example, don't touch the stove, it's too hot)? What is the result? Why?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Making Music

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants explore materials, then discuss the topics.

Purpose

- to experience the four topics
- to show how one activity can be used to teach many different concepts
- to experience the PAT model

Materials

- objects that can be used as "musical instruments," one for each participant. If possible, bring one real instrument (e.g. a harmonica, a recorder).
- Participant Resource, Topic 6, "About multiple intelligences," page 23.
- Participant Resource, Topic 7, "About motivation," page 27.

Activity

Provide each participant with one of the "musical instruments."

Allow participants to explore and find out what sounds their instruments make. If anyone can play the real instrument, ask the person to lead the group in a rhythm band. Allow some time for participants to play their instruments and for their musical "talents" to emerge.

Teach. Ask participants what kind of intelligence this activity required. (Musical intelligence is sure to be mentioned, but other types of intelligences were also involved here.)

FOCUS on Multiple Intelligences
Have parents look at "About multiple intelligences" in the Participant Resource and discuss the seven types of intelligences.

Discuss the varying musical intelligences of the participants. Note that other types of intelligences were shown, such as verbal intelligence in discussing the activity and interpersonal intelligence in working together to form the band. Ask participants if they could recognize any other intelligences being used during the activity. (They might suggest bodily, for example.)

Point out two important facts:
- Everyone has all seven intelligences, but in varying degrees.
- We can improve any of them if we have the opportunity and the motivation.

Ask parents which of the seven intelligences they recognize in their own children. Remind them that following PAT is a good way to provide opportunities for their children to discover and develop multiple intelligences.

FOCUS on Motivation

Ask participants how they felt about participating in the musical activity. Did they feel motivated to take part? Write Glasser's five basic human needs (love and belonging, power, freedom, fun and survival) on a board or flipchart. Explain that these internal needs are what motivate us and make us choose to do what we do.

Everything we do is an attempt to satisfy these basic needs. The rhythm band activity may have satisfied the need for fun, for freedom (to make choices), for love and belonging (being part of the group) or even for power (showing musical intelligence).

Have parents look at "About motivation" in the Participant Resource. Talk about how basic needs affected their motivation to participate in the musical activity.

Ask participants to think back to the briefing when they gave examples of things they do because they want to. Do they now understand what basic needs are being met by their activities?

FOCUS on Ways of Remembering

Relate this topic to the previous activities. How will participants remember the topics from this workshop?

Ask participants if they used their *semantic* memory (words and symbols)? In what way? Did they use their *experiential* (all the senses) memory? For which topics? Did they use their *contextual* memory? How did that work? What topic will they remember best? Ask them how they can use their understanding of these three main ways of remembering to help children learn.

FOCUS on Learning Styles

Ask participants what learning style they used as they were playing their musical instruments. They used *visual* (seeing), *auditory* (hearing), *tactile* (touching) and *kinesthetic* (moving).

Explain that using as many senses as possible maximizes learning. Some people prefer to use one sense and find it easier to learn using that sense. People who learn best by listening are auditory learners; by seeing, visual learners; by touching, tactile learners; by moving and being active, kinesthetic learners.

Explain that young children are usually tactile and kinesthetic learners. However, they may develop another preferred learning style as they get older. Once children are in school, their learning style can have an effect on how well they do. Reading is an auditory-visual activity. Since the auditory and visual modes are most often used in classrooms, children who have auditory and visual learning styles often do best. Children who prefer tactile and kinesthetic learning styles may have difficulties.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

BRIEFING

TOPIC 10

Developmental Stages of Learning

(page 35, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Name one or two developmental stages of learning. (A child passes quickly through many stages during the first 5 years because growth is so rapid.)

Examples: What developmental milestones signalled your children moving from one stage to another (for example, holds up head, begins to crawl, first tooth)?

Key Messages: Have you ever expected children to do something, and then realized they just were not "ready" at that time?

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key message before we move on to the learning activity?

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DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

5 Make the Most of the Participant Resource

During most of the workshop, participants learn by doing the activities rather than by reading the information in the Participant Resource. Based on your own preference and that of the group, choose a topic from this workshop to further explore in the Participant Resource. Turn to the section and lead an informal discussion. Repeat for other topics if you have the time.

Encourage parents to use the Participant Resource at home to:

- review the topics
- get more information
- get ideas for learning activities with children
- share their new knowledge with friends

MODULE TWO

More About Understanding Learning

Introduction

This module points out your child's own special intelligences and learning styles, explains what motivates children to learn, explains learning and remembering, and shows how developmental readiness affects children's learning.

More About Understanding Learning Topics

Topic 6:	Multiple Intelligences
Topic 7:	Motivation
Topic 8:	Ways of Remembering
Topic 9:	Learning Styles
Topic 10:	Developmental Stages of Learning

TOPIC 6

Multiple Intelligences

Definition

Multiple intelligences means that people are smart in many ways.

Examples

- Some children may be especially good at running and climbing. (*body smart*)
- Some children can empathize when a little playmate gets hurt. (*people smart*)
- Some children like to sing or listen to music. (*music smart*)

Key messages

- **The concept of multiple intelligences is empowering to you and your child.**
- **Intelligence is not limited to being good at things like reading or math.**
- **Recognizing and celebrating a child's own special intelligences will allow the budding and full flowering of self-esteem that goes with it.**

About multiple intelligences

We are all gifted in some ways: maybe in making up riddles or comforting others. We are all also ordinary in some ways: maybe playing tennis or singing. And we are all kind of klutzy in others: maybe tying shoelaces or playing cards.

Children are also smart in their own way. Not just clever, bright or talented, but actually intelligent. Unfortunately, being smart is often equated with "book smart." Many think that people are not really intelligent unless they are good at reading, spelling and writing. But this is only one kind of intelligence. The true potential of our children's multiple intelligences needs to be recognized and developed.

Research shows that there are at least seven different ways to be smart. In his book, *Frames of Mind*, Howard Gardner outlines seven distinct intelligences:

1. Word Smart
(*Verbal – Linguistic Intelligence*)

- the ability to use spoken or written words effectively. This includes understanding and using language well, especially words, stories, sounds, meanings, spelling, writing and grammar. Children who have this kind of intelligence learn best by verbalizing, hearing or seeing words.

2. Math Smart
(*Logical – Mathematical Intelligence*)

- the ability to understand and use numbers easily. This includes understanding patterns of numbers, measurement, scientific concepts, logic puzzles and prices. Children who have this kind of intelligence learn best by seeing patterns, asking questions and figuring out the "why" of things.

3. Picture Smart
(*Visual – Spatial Intelligence*)

- the ability to visualize concepts. This includes reading maps and plans, drawing diagrams, figuring out how to build things and giving directions. Children with this kind of intelligence learn best by visualizing things, seeing pictures, drawing and doodling.

4. Body Smart
(*Bodily or Kinesthetic Intelligence*)

- a strength in the area of bodily movement, like balance, coordination, dexterity and speed. This includes a natural ability to play sports, dance, mime and do other athletic activities. These children learn best by using their bodies, moving or acting things out, and being directly involved in activities.

5. Music Smart
(*Musical Intelligence*)

- the ability to hear, discriminate and understand musical patterns, play a musical instrument, read music, sing, whistle, hum, remember melodies, keep time rhythmically to music. These children learn best using music, rhythm and dance.

6. People Smart
(*Interpersonal Intelligence*)

- the ability to relate well to others, including "tuning in to" other people's feelings, desires and ideas; a natural ability to relate to others; having lots of friends; and resolving conflicts. These children learn best in group situations by relating and cooperating with others.

7. Self Smart
(*Intrapersonal Intelligence*)

- the ability to act appropriately based on self-knowledge. This includes a strong personality and a tendency to think carefully, have strong opinions and work toward goals in a quiet way. These children learn best when allowed to work independently and according to their own nature.

We can use our knowledge about the different kinds of intelligences to help children develop their natural talents and abilities. Observe and get to know your child's likes, dislikes and ways of dealing with everyday happenings. Discover and develop your child's different intelligences, noting areas of interest and particular talents and skills.

A child who is interested in music and has natural rhythm demonstrates this by moving his body, singing along and clapping his hands when listening to a favourite tune. Encourage this musical intelligence by playing music, watching, joining in and showing him that you like and appreciate his talents.

A child who has a natural ability to take interconnecting blocks apart and put them together again in different shapes and sizes will continue to do so in more challenging ways if this behaviour is applauded as natural curiosity and talent rather than misbehaviour.

You can provide opportunities for children to develop their intelligences in all areas. By providing opportunities for children to discover their strengths, you are encouraging and nurturing the development of all the intelligences.

By knowing the child – watching her play, having conversations and interacting daily – you will soon learn where she shines. Your role is to follow the child's lead.

In his book, *In Their Own Way: Discovering and Encouraging Your Child's Personal Learning Style*, Thomas Armstrong tells the story about the animals who decided to create a school for climbing, flying, running, swimming and digging. They couldn't agree on which subject was most important, so they agreed that all the students had to take the same curriculum. The rabbit was an expert in running, but almost drowned in swimming class. The experience shocked her so much that she never could run as well after that. The eagle was a whiz at flying, but when he showed up for digging class, he was so inadequate that he was sent to digging remediation class. It took up so much of his time that he soon forgot how to fly. Similar things happened to all the other animals, too. They could no longer shine in their areas of expertise because they all had negative experiences in their areas of weakest ability.

There is a need for all of us to have ability in some of the intelligences. We need to develop areas where we are weak as best as we can.

How do multiple intelligences affect children's lifelong learning?

Recognizing and valuing children's many forms of intelligence will enable them to reach their potential in many areas of learning throughout their life. If they have been provided with opportunities to discover and try out their various intelligences, and their efforts have been encouraged, they will have the confidence to take learning risks throughout their life. Through their explorations, they will find that they are naturally better at some things than others, and that they can get "smarter" in other areas as well, if they have the motivation.

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Activity for parents

Discover your strengths

Think about your adult friends. What specific talents and skills do they have? Do you know someone who can sit down at a piano and play a complicated tune by ear? Someone who can take a piece of fabric, cut it into pieces and sew an outfit that looks as if it were made by a professional? Someone who can come into your house and tell you what materials you'll need to renovate your kitchen, complete with a list of sizes and amounts? These are all examples of intelligences.

Think about your own intelligences. List them, starting with your strongest one and ending where you think you are the weakest.

Think about how good you feel each time you perform a task well. When you're able to shine in your own special intelligences – cooking, carpentry, golf, speaking, writing or playing guitar, that "good feeling" is self-esteem. Children need high self-esteem to reach their goals and be happy, productive adults.

TOPIC 7

Motivation

Definition

Motivation is the internal drive that makes us want to do something to meet our basic needs.

Examples

- Some people take classes in ballroom dancing. (*fun*)
- Some people look forward to getting away on a vacation with their family. (*love and belonging*)
- Some people take night classes to improve their knowledge. (*power and control*)

Key messages

- Motivation comes from within to meet a basic need.
- Knowing what motivates a child can help you to provide the best learning environment possible.

About motivation

We often wish we could make children do certain things – for example, eat their vegetables, leave the china ornaments alone or use the potty. However, we can't make people do something they don't want to do – unless we use force or persuasion.

Motivation comes from within. For example, we cannot make a person believe something. We cannot force a person to want to do something. But we can arrange certain conditions. We are all motivated to meet our basic needs. Psychiatrist William Glasser in his book *Choice Theory* tells us that all humans have five basic needs: love and belonging, fun, freedom, power (control) and survival.

Love and Belonging: Our need for love and belonging is met in our intimate and community relationships. Our husband or wife, children, other family members and close friends help to satisfy our need to get and give love. Other relationships – with workmates, social groups and neighbours – all provide ways to satisfy our need to belong.

Fun: Fun is anything that gives us pleasure. Fun is different things to different people. It could be reading a book, playing a musical instrument, watching a sunset. Both children and adults learn when they are having fun.

Freedom: Our need for freedom is met by being able to make choices in our lives, both large and small. Some examples are where we live, what work we do, whom we associate with, what we eat and what we do in our leisure time.

Power: Power is a sense of importance. Having a positive effect on people's lives, gaining respect, competence and achievement are ways of meeting our need for power. Sometimes, our accomplishments are recognized through praise and awards.

Survival: People need basic physical requirements for survival, for example, air, water, food and shelter.

If people are not motivated in a particular learning situation, it means they feel their needs are not being met, so they feel no inner drive to engage in it.

Madeline Hunter in her book *Motivation* has identified several factors that have a powerful effect on motivation. By keeping these in mind, your job of helping children to satisfy their needs will be much easier.

Concern: Children are motivated to do things they are concerned about. "I don't care" can mean "I won't try." If the child is content with the way things are, he will not feel motivated to change them. If he is not satisfied with the situation as it is, he will feel some need to change it. However, too much concern may turn into anxiety and may decrease motivation.

Tone: The feeling you express in your tone of voice may be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Making the atmosphere pleasant increases motivation. If you need to be firm, use a pleasant tone of voice. Use it again when praising the child after he does what you ask.

Interest: We are naturally more motivated to learn what interests us. Interest, like reading, is learned, usually by having good experiences with that subject. You can help children develop interest by:

- making learning more meaningful
- making learning more vivid or different from what is usually experienced.

Success: Children's motivation increases as their success increases.

Knowledge of Results: Children need honest feedback. Answer questions like "How am I doing?" in an honest way. This lets children know when they are right or what they need to change. Remember to answer these questions in an encouraging way.

Rewards: Rewards can be external (prizes, marks or praise) or internal (satisfaction from within). When the activity or learning itself is the reward for the effort, learning is more productive, satisfying and self-directed.

Children are highly motivated to learn about their world. Sometimes they are motivated to get into things you'd rather they didn't! Knowledge **is** power, survival, fun, freedom and belonging!

Our role as adults is to make sure we don't discourage the motivation to learn. Provide interesting things to see and do. To ensure that your child will be successful at most of her learning efforts, give honest feedback and encourage her to learn more.

Most self-directed learning is naturally motivational. It brings its own intrinsic rewards. However, your child will need to learn some things even though he may not be very motivated. Dressing properly for the weather, observing safety rules and developing social skills are some examples of necessary learnings.

When a person appears unmotivated, it usually means that needs are not being met in that situation. This insight will help you think about how you can help your child satisfy her needs while learning. For example, your child's need to have some control (power) over her own life may be satisfied when you ask, "Do you want to wear your blue hat or your green hat today?" instead of just putting a hat on her head. Allowing and encouraging your child to make age-appropriate choices not only motivates her, but helps to develop essential thinking strategies.

ACTIVITY for parents

What motivates you?

Think of an activity that you do regularly, such as a job, working out, a volunteer project, a class, a leisure activity. What motivates you to do this activity? What basic needs does it meet?

Think of an activity that you used to do, but have stopped participating in. What originally motivated you to start? What basic needs did it satisfy? Why did you stop?

How does motivation affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5

Young children are most strongly motivated by the need to survive, and by the need to be loved and nurtured. Children who do not receive emotional nourishment through loving touches, talking and stimulation, as well as food and other physical necessities, will "fail to thrive." In extreme cases, life-threatening situations can arise when children are deprived of basic needs.

The school years: 6 – 12

Children have great cognitive learning capacity and continue to be self-motivated to learn. Self-motivation will fade if they meet failure or negative feedback, or do not find the things they are required to learn interesting or rewarding.

Adolescence: 13 – 18

Adolescents are powerfully motivated by the need to belong. The intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences come to the fore as teenagers struggle to understand their inner selves and their relationships with others.

Adulthood

Adults continue to be motivated to meet their basic needs throughout life. When motivated, they seek new ways to satisfy and enrich these needs.

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TOPIC 8

Ways of Remembering

Definition

Ways of remembering are the ways the brain uses to store and recall information in order to learn.

Examples

- To pass the written test for your driver's licence, you study the driver's manual. (*semantic*)
- To pass the road test for your driver's licence, you practise driving. (*experiential*)
- You remember that you left your keys at the laundromat because you remember having them when you were at your sister's just before that. (*contextual*)

Key messages

- **Remembering is an important part of learning.**
- **Understanding the three main ways of remembering can help you make remembering easier for your child.**

About ways of remembering

There are three main ways of remembering:

1. Words (Written or Spoken) – Semantic

- words, prose and symbols. Book learning is usually the most difficult. Of all the ways of learning, the brain is least efficient at remembering print and text (Jensen, 1996). That's why you usually have to go back and reread the story or study the prose to recall information.

2. Hands-on Learning – Experiential

- using all the senses. Hands-on learning stores memories in your brain and your body. We use our senses to see, hear, smell, touch and taste to learn things. Our brains store memories according to the senses we have used. When children experience something using all their senses, they have a much better chance of recalling it because it has been stored in several places in the brain according to each sense.

3. Relation Learning – Contextual

- information recall based on where we were, who we were with, what was happening, and when it happened. We remember something in relation to when, where, how and why it happened, and who and what was involved. We do not recall things in isolation. If you are asked to remember what you ate for dinner last night, you do it by putting yourself back into the situation you were in when you had dinner: "I was at a restaurant with two friends having a vegetarian lasagne." In contextual learning, the brain learns and remembers by connecting things.

As children develop vocabulary, they rely on experiential and contextual learning to store and remember information.

Children who are learning to relate new things often relate them to something they have already learned. For example, they might have played with a white cat at home – when they see a rabbit in the woods, they try to figure out if it's the same. It has fur, it has ears, its face is similar. It's a big job trying to remember the features of a cat and then compare them to the rabbit they have just seen. The senses may say that the animals are the same, but the context will probably tell children they are different in some way.

Talking, listening and reading to children are all important activities in helping children learn how to remember. Discussions about a wide variety of topics provide another clue for the child to make sense of things. Each question, each discussion, each story adds to the experience.

Adults who interact with children regularly are allowing them to gain new experiences, prior knowledge and memories.

How do ways of remembering affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5
Children are developing ways of remembering – efficient ways of storing and recalling information and experiences. Experiential and contextual ways of remembering are predominant. Semantic learning is beginning.

The school years: 6 – 12
Experiential and contextual ways of remembering are being refined. Children are building their semantic ways of remembering through reading and using texts of all kinds.

Adolescence: 13 – 18
Further refinement of experiential, contextual and semantic ways of remembering takes place. The focus is on intrapersonal (self) and interpersonal (other) learning.

Adulthood
By this time the learning and memory systems have been established. Most adults have developed tricks and tools to help them remember things, like making lists or rhyming words.

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ACTIVITIES for parents

What do you remember?

Try learning something using each of these different ways of remembering.

Semantic: Read something. A few hours later, try to recall in detail what you read.

Experiential: Use your senses – all of your senses – to learn something. A few hours later, tell someone what you learned.

Contextual: Ask who, what, when, where, why and how questions as you learn something. A few hours later, recall the answers to these six questions.

Putting it together

Put a toy together:

- read the directions (semantic)
- put the toy together (experiential)
- use questions (who? what? when? etc.) to store the experience (contextual)
- explain how you did it to a friend

Your playing child

Watch your child for an hour, for example, as she plays in the sand. Notice:

- What does she do with the sand?
- What senses is she using?
- What does she seem to be learning?
- What do you think she'll remember from this play?

TOPIC 9

Learning Styles

Definition

People learn in different ways. Some learn best by seeing, others by hearing, and still others by touching.

Examples

- Some children want to watch someone show them how to do something. (*seeing*)
- Some children follow directions better when they hear them than when they read them. (*hearing*)
- Others seem to want to touch and feel everything. (*touching*)

Key messages

- When you know a child's preferred learning style, you can help that child learn more effectively.
- It is important for you to know about your own learning style because this is the one you use when teaching your child. However, your learning style can be different from the child's. This could be frustrating for both of you.

About learning styles

There are four basic learning styles:

- **Visual** (seeing)
- **Auditory** (hearing)
- **Tactile** (touching)
- **Kinesthetic** (moving)

Most people have a preferred learning style, although they use a variety of styles too. People have varying degrees of preference – some are highly visual, auditory, tactile or kinesthetic. Others seem to like all four learning styles.

It's important to discover how you learn best and how your child learns best. The best way is through observation: by watching her play, alone or with friends, and by talking with her. Watch and think about what your child does and how she is doing it.

You can help your child become an effective learner and a confident person with developed talents and skills. The activities you do can be simple. Provide opportunities for him to explore the world using all of his senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting. A child's home is a learning laboratory: he learns by playing with clay, puzzles, colour, blocks, music, dance, conversation, songs, games, books, crayons and paper, pots and pans.

How do learning styles affect children's lifelong learning?

At any age, children learn more easily using their preferred learning style. But just because they have a preferred style doesn't mean they can't and won't learn any other way. In fact, they should be encouraged to use and improve **all** modes of learning. The more senses children use to learn, the more information they can absorb! A good guideline is to allow children to use their preferred style when learning essential information, and to practise using other learning styles when learning other things.

Very young children are usually tactile and kinesthetic learners. Visual and auditory preferences may emerge later. Schools have traditionally used visual and auditory teaching styles the most, especially in the upper grades. Children who learn easily through these modes are usually successful in school, while tactile and kinesthetic learners may find school difficult.

All future learning is affected by early learning experiences. If these experiences are positive and satisfying, the foundations are formed for enthusiastic lifelong learning. Attention to learning styles when a child is young will help to make learning positive and enjoyable.

ACTIVITY for parents

Learning style checklist

What do you think is your preferred learning style?

Visual learners often:
- remember visual details
- prefer to see what they are learning
- like to have paper and pens handy
- doodle while listening
- have trouble following lectures
- like to write down instructions or telephone numbers

Auditory learners often:
- enjoy discussion
- remember by talking out loud
- need to have things explained orally
- have trouble with written instructions
- talk to themselves while learning something new
- repeat a telephone number to remember it

Tactile and kinesthetic learners often:
- prefer activities
- want to actually do whatever is being talked about or learned
- like to move around while listening or talking
- often "talk" with their hands
- like to touch things to learn about them
- remember things by recalling who did what, rather than who said what

Watch your child at play. Does she already show a preferred way to learn? Remember that young children are still developing and most are very tactile and kinesthetic – they want and need to be actively involved to understand things. Make sure your child has many opportunities to use **all** of the learning styles so that she can develop to her full potential.

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TOPIC 10

Developmental Stages of Learning

Definition

Developmental stages of learning are the blocks of time – from birth to 18 – when the growth of the body affects learning in different ways.

Examples

- Newborns cannot eat solid food until they have teeth and can chew.
- Children are ready to walk when their balance has developed and their legs are strong enough to support them.

Key messages

- Children's learning is affected by the normal stages of growth.
- You can offer learning experiences at appropriate times.
- Children may not be developmentally ready to learn a certain thing at a certain time.
- Understanding the developmental stages of learning can help you be patient when progress is slow and be alert to possible problems.

About developmental stages of learning

From birth to 18 years old, our bodies are growing, developing and learning how to learn. Our senses are taking in information all the time.

A newborn's brain is ready to soak up information like a dry sponge soaks up water. But unlike a sponge, no matter how much information the brain takes in, it can absorb more. We use less than 70% of our brain capacity for neural connections (Jensen, 1996). The brain processes millions of bits of information per hour. A child's first touches, tastes, smells, sights and sounds are registered in different parts of the brain and linked with other bits of information.

During the first 18 years, there are significant developmental learning stages when the body and mind show growth spurts and shift gears to understand the world. These stages take place at about the same time for all of us.

How do developmental stages of learning affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5

Two major developmental stages occur during these years: birth to 2 years of age, and 3 to 5 years of age. During the first 2 years, the brain and body are consumed with figuring out the essentials of survival. An infant depends totally on adults and everything is new. From 3 to 5 years of age, children explore, explore, explore. They learn language, master body movement, figure out relationships and form a self-image.

The school years: 6 – 12

Learning focuses on forming patterns by linking information. One bit of information is connected with another bit of information to make bigger and bigger pictures of the world. Young children have very little knowledge or concern about people outside their immediate families. They are naturally self-centred. Adults guide children in their understanding of relationships. Children believe what adults tell them about themselves and others. If children are told that they are smart, they believe it. If told they are stupid, they believe that, too. Positive and negative attitudes are most often learned at home.

Adolescence: 13 – 18

Bodies are changing rapidly. Chemical signals are released and the brain starts paying attention to relationships. Romantic and sexual interests begin – and it takes time for skills to develop in these areas. Teens spend time thinking about who they are and how others fit in. This can be a difficult time of life, especially for those who feel even a little bit different from their peers. Fitting in is very important.

Adulthood

The big changes in brain growth have already happened. As the natural process of aging takes place, our physical bodies become less efficient. But this is not true for our minds. For as long as we live, we can still learn.

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ACTIVITY for Parents

Match 'em up!

The goal of this activity is to provide:

- an awareness of five major categories of child development
- examples of skills and abilities that relate to the categories
- an approximate time range when these skills and abilities begin to develop

Note: It takes more information than is provided in Topic 10 to determine if a child is developing on a steady and healthy course. To learn more about this important subject, talk to people in the health or education field who work with young children.

Read the examples for each category. Choose an age range from the ones below that you think fits with the examples of skills and abilities in each category.

The corresponding age ranges are given on the next page.

Age Range:	**3–6 months (Infant)**	**13–18 months (Older Baby)**	**2–3 years (Toddler)**	**4–5 years (Young Child)**

Categories of development	**Age range**
Cognitive:	
• follows one-step requests	________________
• can put together toys with different parts	________________
• counts to three	________________
• eyes locate source of sound	________________
Social-Emotional	
• understands the needs of others	________________
• likes peek-a-boo	________________
• can be inflexible and rigid	________________
• plays apart from familiar people	________________

Motor

- stands firmly when held
- jumps up and down with both feet
- catches many things
- hops on one foot

Language

- responds to simple questions
- uses single words often
- can tell stories with some sequence
- recognizes own name

Self-Help

- stretches arms to be picked up
- unbuttons large buttons
- can take responsibility for acting safely
- uses spoon without a lot of spilling

Answers

Cognitive:

• eyes locate source of sound	3–5 months
• follows one-step requests	13–18 months
• counts to three	2-3 years
• put together toys	4–5 years

Social-Emotional:

• likes peek-a-boo	3–5 months
• plays apart ... people	13–18 months
• can be inflexible and rigid	2–3 years
• understands the needs ...	4–5 years

Motor:

• stands firmly when held	3–5 months
• jumps off floor with both feet	13–18 months
• hops on one foot	2–3 years
• catches many things	4–5 years

Language:

• recognizes own name	3–5 months
• uses single words often	13–18 months
• responds to ... questions	2–3 years
• can tell stories ... sequence	4–5 years

Self-Help:

• stretches arms to be picked up	3–5 months
• uses spoon without ... spilling	13–18 months
• unbuttons large buttons	2–3 years
• can take responsibility ... safely	4–5 years

1

Share Learning Experiences

Invite participants to share some things that have happened with their children over the past week. How were these things learning experiences?

As participants share, make connections between these experiences and the topics you have discussed. By framing these experiences within a learning context, participants will see that they don't have to be teachers in a school set up at home. They just need to be aware of – and take advantage of – all natural opportunities for learning. Point out that participants are giving their children enriched learning every day.

Explore the enriched learning that is taking place every day:

- What did your child seem to be learning on his own?
- What do you think your child is learning from you?
- What are you learning from your child?
- How are you using PAT in your everyday activities?

2

Discuss Life Management Topic

Turn to the life management section at the back of the Participant Resource (page 147) and choose one topic. Lead an informal discussion.

Space is provided below for you to prepare several questions to get participants talking and to help you keep the discussion on track.

Life Management Topic ______________________

Questions ______________________________

____

____

3

Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

Explain that doing the hands-on learning activities will bring the topics to life.

This week's topics and learning activities are:

CYCLE #1
Topic 11: Observe
Topic 12: Compare and Contrast
Learning Activity – *Con-senses*

CYCLE #2
Topic 13: Pattern
Topic 14: Predict
Topic 15: Main Idea
Learning Activity – *Book Talk*

CYCLE #3
Topic 16: Understanding Pictures
Topic 17: Real and Pretend
Learning Activity – *Picture Reading*

4

Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

In this step, you will take the participants through the Experiencing Learning Cycle three times. To help you do this, the three stages are graphically identified both here and on the Experiencing Learning Cycle poster.

BRIEFING | LEARNING ACTIVITY | DEBRIEFING

1

BRIEFING

TOPIC 11

Observe

(page 41, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: How does this definition relate to multisensory learning? How does observation use all the senses? (Observing is the thinking strategy involved when we use all our senses to learn about the world.)

Examples: How do your children learn by observing?

Key Messages: Is there an object that you can remember that relates to your early childhood? What is it and what sense(s) did you use to remember it (for example, the smell of bread baking, taste of a lemon, feel of an animal, sight of a gift, sound of a horn)?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 12

Compare and Contrast

(page 43, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: How can you help your children learn by comparing one thing with another? How would you use compare and contrast for food, toys, clothing, people?

Examples: What are some other examples of comparing and contrasting things when you explain something to young children?

Key Messages: How do children compare and contrast as they are learning to speak? (For example, they put sounds together based on how they use them in other words. They hear the "a" in apple and compare it with other sounds they are learning. The ability to hear similarities and differences in the sounds of a language allows children to learn to speak it.) Do your children do this consciously?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Con-senses

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topics while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to demonstrate how we use our senses
- to show how observing, and comparing and contrasting help us link information in the process of thinking
- to demonstrate that everyday foods can be learning tools

Materials

- two items (2 for each participant)

Activity

Give two foods to each participant. (You could use a candy and a cheesie, a cookie and a cracker, a banana and an apple.) Explain that they are going to compare and contrast these two foods – what is the same and what is different. To do this, they will need lots of information about the foods. How will they get this information? They will need to observe each food very carefully – using all their senses. Observing is the thinking strategy involved when we make a deliberate choice to use multisensory learning to get as much information as possible.

Ask participants to observe using each of their senses to:

- look at the candy and the cheesie
- smell the candy and the cheesie
- feel the candy and the cheesie
- listen to the candy and the cheesie
- taste the candy and the cheesie

Encourage participants to give as many comparisons as they can using descriptive words:

- *Compare*: How do these foods look the same?
  Contrast: How do they look different?
- *Compare:* How do they smell the same?
  Contrast: How do they smell different?
- *Compare:* How do they feel the same?
  Contrast: How do they feel different?
- *Compare:* How do they sound the same?
  Contrast: How do they sound different?
- *Compare:* How do they taste the same?
  Contrast: How do they taste different?

Ask participants to comment on the opportunities children would have for learning new information, new concepts and new words when doing such an activity.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

BRIEFING

TOPIC 13

Pattern

(page 45, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What is one thing you did within the past week that fits this definition?

Examples: What are some other examples of patterns in your children's lives?

Key Messages: Discuss briefly how recognizing patterns helps us to remember things, and enables us to predict and therefore plan in our lives. Discuss some negative and positive patterns – for example, some bad and good habits. (When we recognize negative patterns, we can change them. When we recognize positive patterns, we can reinforce them.)

TOPIC 14

Predict

(page 47, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some examples from your own experience?

Examples: What other examples can you share from your own experience?

Key Messages: How do these messages fit with what you see in your daily life with children?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 15

Main Idea

(page 49, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What is the main idea (the point, the purpose) of a diaper? What other things and main ideas can you think of?

Examples: What is the main idea of giving examples?

Key Messages: In what ways can you help your children focus on the main idea of a task? Explain that participants could give the main idea first, and then the details. For example, "John, it's time to get ready for lunch (main idea). First, let's clear the table. Now, it's time to wash your hands."

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

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LEARNING ACTIVITY

Book Talk

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants explore materials, then discuss the topics. Ask participants to work with a partner.

Purpose

- to provide read-aloud strategies to enrich children's learning
- to experience the PAT model

Materials

- two or three children's books per pair
- a book that has a pattern – either rhymes or repetitive words – to use later in the workshop – such as *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* by Bill Martin Jr. (for yourself)

Activity

Ask participants to work with a partner. Participants take turns reading to each other in pairs.

Provide each pair with two or three children's books.

Allow them to "observe" and "compare and contrast" the books.

Teach. After a few minutes, ask them what patterns they observed in the books. Were there rhymes? Repetitions of words? Repeated actions?

Have participants listen while you read the book you kept. As you read, pause and ask them to predict what will come next. Ask how they are able to tell what will come next when they haven't read the book.

Encourage them to comment on their prior knowledge of what happened in the story. Do they recognize a pattern?

Make the point that recognizing patterns helps us predict what is coming next, so we can plan and order our lives. Ask parents about patterns in their children's daily life, for example, feedings, naps, outings, bedtime. Discuss how these routines (patterns) help their child to predict and plan, and to feel secure.

Now, ask them if they can tell you the story you just read. Point out that the pattern makes it easier to remember. Talk about how much more easily we remember poetry or songs that have rhyming or musical patterns. In other words, the main idea of a children's book with patterns is to provide text that is easy for children to read and remember.

Encourage participants to discuss "main idea." Suggested prompts: What is the main idea of a newspaper? What is the main idea of the comics section? Of the sports section? Of the financial section? Ask participants to look again at the books they have been reading and talk to each other about the main idea of the story.

Talk about how living our daily lives depends on understanding the main idea of things. For example, we need to understand that the main idea of a car or a bus is transportation, but we don't need to know every detail about how they work to be able to use them.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

3

BRIEFING

TOPIC 16

Understanding Pictures

(page 51, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some of the many different kinds of pictures there are and the messages we get from them?

Examples: How have your children used pictures?

Key Messages: How might you use compare and contrast when discussing pictures with children? (Pictures are especially important in helping very young children understand what is being read to them, because they don't have first-hand prior knowledge of many things.)

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

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TOPIC 17

Real and Pretend

(page 53, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What examples of real and pretend can you share from your own experience?

Examples: What was your child's most recent pretend activity? What was the child learning or practising? How many participants have heard children play "Mommy" or "Daddy?" Remind them that they are powerful role models for children and much of their "teaching" takes place without them being aware of it.

Key Messages: Why is it so important for you to help children distinguish between real and pretend on TV? (It may be difficult for children to tell real from pretend on TV.)

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

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LEARNING ACTIVITY

Picture Reading

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topics while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to show how discussing pictures develops a child's ability to think

Materials

- a children's picture book

Activity

Use a children's picture book to model a discussion about one of the pictures. Show participants that they can use the topics such as Observe, Compare and Contrast, Pattern, Predict, and Label, along with questioning and prior knowledge, to develop their children's understanding and vocabulary.

Introduce Real and Pretend by asking participants if what is shown in the picture could really happen. Lead into a discussion about TV and how difficult it is for children to understand that most of what is on TV is "pretend." Even cartoon characters may be "real" to young children.

Encourage parents to share some things they do to help their child deal with real and pretend on TV, and to discuss this issue.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

5 Make the Most of the Participant Resource

During most of the workshop, participants learn by doing the activities rather than by reading the information in the Participant Resource. Based on your own preference and that of the group, choose a topic from this workshop to further explore in the Participant Resource. Turn to the section and lead an informal discussion. Repeat for other topics if you have the time.

Encourage parents to use the Participant Resource at home to:
- review the topics
- get more information
- get ideas for learning activities with children
- share their new knowledge with friends

MODULE THREE

Process of Thinking

Introduction

Thinking is what we do when we gather and organize information, process that information and make decisions about what to do with that information. Thinking and learning go hand-in-hand. The brain of a child who gets lots of multisensory stimulation will be constantly gathering information and making connections that link new information with previous experiences. If these sensory experiences occur in the presence of positive emotions and the child is given the language to describe the experiences, an ideal learning situation occurs. The brain becomes "wired" to make the connections permanent.

The Process of Thinking module identifies 14 specific thinking strategies that are essential for every kind of learning, from tying shoelaces to crossing a street safely, from choosing who to invite to a birthday party to learning how to read.

The more opportunities you provide for your children to observe, compare and contrast, categorize, recognize patterns, predict, etc., the more thinking connections they will make. Give your children appropriate words so their thinking is connected to language. Your children will then be able to use that strategy again when they need it.

Process of Thinking Topics

Topic 11: Observe
Topic 12: Compare and Contrast
Topic 13: Pattern
Topic 14: Predict
Topic 15: Main Idea
Topic 16: Understanding Pictures
Topic 17: Real and Pretend

TOPIC 11

Observe

Definition

Observing is using all your senses to learn about the world.

Examples

- Babies learn by touching, seeing, listening to and tasting while playing with a rattle.
- Toddlers learn by tasting, touching, smelling, seeing and even listening (squish, squish) while eating.
- Young children learn by seeing, smelling and touching while finger painting.
- A mother learns about her child as she holds him in her arms. The mother's senses of sight, hearing, smell and touch are involved – and so are the child's.

Key messages

- Everything we know is learned through our senses of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.
- The more senses we use, the more we learn.
- There are many ways of using observation in daily life to help children learn about the world.

About observing

Getting as much information as possible through observation is a key thinking strategy. Without information, we can't use other thinking strategies very well. We need information to compare and contrast, to label, to understand cause and effect, to make decisions.

Observing is directly linked to multisensory learning. By using as many senses as possible, we are able to get more information.

How does observing affect children's lifelong learning?

The more opportunities adults give children – from birth – to learn about things using as many senses as possible, the more information they will have about the world.

This "prior knowledge" forms the essential building blocks of thinking for a lifetime. It will help in reading, writing, understanding science, math, social studies and other subjects. Future reading comprehension also depends on prior knowledge.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Observing with your child

You can develop observation as you do everyday things with your child. For example, put a new kind of cereal in a bowl. Explore the cereal together:

- Look at the cereal.
- Listen to the cereal.
- Smell the cereal.
- Touch the cereal.
- Taste the cereal.

As you and your child use your senses to get information about the cereal, use words that tell how the cereal looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes. For example, the cereal looks round, sounds crunchy, tastes like apples.

You can use observation on a trip to the grocery store, a visit to a relative or while playing with a pet, and with many other things.

TOPIC 12

Compare and Contrast

Definition

Comparing and contrasting is observing objects or events and noting how they are the same and how they are different.

Examples

- Babies are aware of the special smell, voice and touch of their parents.
- When toddlers learn the word "car," they may say "car" for any moving vehicle.
- Young children compare their hair colour with a friend's.
- Preschoolers form opinions about favourite things based on comparisons – toys, books, videos, people, food and activities.
- Parents notice a difference in their child's behaviour when she has a good nap in the afternoon.

Key messages

- Children use comparing and contrasting to develop concepts and language that become prior knowledge.
- Using phrases like "This looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels like..." and "This reminds me of..." encourages children to compare and contrast.

About compare and contrast

When we compare, we look for what is the same about two or more objects or events. When we contrast, we look for what is different. Often, we do both. Comparing and contrasting begins at a very early age. Babies often cry when they are picked up by a stranger. They are able to contrast your smell and the sound of your voice with this new person.

Comparing and contrasting helps us to "stick" new information to old information, our prior knowledge. When children see relationships among events or objects, they know where to file the new information in their mind. This makes it easier to remember things. As language is developing, children compare and contrast to learn new words and concepts.

How does comparing and contrasting affect children's lifelong learning?

When children compare and contrast, they are able to form opinions, make decisions and learn new things. When children learn to read, they compare new words to those they already know. If you can read the word "cat," you can probably read bat, sat, rat, mat, hat and fat. Comparing one story with another and with real life also helps their learning.

Comparing and contrasting also allows children to form judgements and individual values. Learning to respect what is the same and different about people is an important part of developing friendships and good working relationships.

ACTIVITY for parents to do with children

Snack time

This activity compares and contrasts using two kinds of food. Once you have done it, you'll think of many other opportunities to use comparing and contrasting in daily activities with your child.

Choose two different foods at snack time. Try to pick foods that have some similarities and some differences. For example, choose an orange and a banana, two colours of cheeses or a cookie and a cracker.

Ask your child questions about the similarities and differences between the two foods. Your child might notice that one of the foods is orange and one is yellow, or that both are cold. You can model this by thinking out loud, "One cheese is orange and one is white." You can also use phrases like "This reminds me of..." or "This looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes like..." This is comparing and contrasting.

Try comparing and contrasting toys, books, music, nature, animals, events, movies, people and other things.

TOPIC 13

Pattern

Definition

A pattern is a regularly repeated sequence or arrangement of objects, ideas, events or behaviours.

Examples

- Babies are comforted and reassured by a consistent pattern, like eating, changing, playing, cuddling and napping.
- Toddlers have a pattern of saying "no" to everything you ask them.
- Children learning to talk add "s" or "es" to any word they want to pluralize, like "sheeps" or "kidses."
- The daily routine of a kindergarten class provides children with a sense of comfort, predictability and security.
- Parents usually have their children follow a bedtime routine.

Key messages

- Patterns help us to predict and remember things.
- Patterns can be pleasing and fun in themselves
- Patterns can be changed.

About recognizing patterns

Recognizing patterns is important for predicting what is going to happen next and for remembering the things we learn.

Babies are learning the patterns of turn taking and sequence in conversation when they engage in face-to-face play (like peekaboo or making faces) with their parents.

Children are naturally drawn to patterns and will make patterns themselves with blocks, paper, toy cars or dolls. You can enhance children's recognition of patterns by discussing their patterns with them. Point out patterns that they might not be aware of – in wallpaper, in nature, in daily routines.

A consistent daily routine is important to children's sense of security and well-being. When parents and caregivers stick to a regular pattern, while leaving room for flexibility, children feel safe to explore, observe and discover their world.

Children and parents recognize the patterns of each other's behaviour and use them to predict each other's actions and reactions. Being aware of these patterns can help us to change the ones that are not working well. For example, if you know that your child cries when it's time to go home, let him know that you're going to go 5 minutes before you leave. This change in pattern might help to stop the crying.

How does recognizing patterns affect children's lifelong learning?

Being able to understand and see patterns helps us to make connections to our prior knowledge. A pattern is a sequence that happens over and over. When a child sees, hears, smells, touches or tastes something new, she can ask herself "What does this remind me of?"

Language is a pattern. You need to recognize the patterns of language to understand what you're reading. When children can see language patterns, they learn that words, sentences and paragraphs come together to make a story. Being able to group information in this way makes learning easier. Children who have difficulty recognizing language patterns try to memorize each word or sentence, taking valuable energy away from comprehending and remembering the story.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Exploring patterns

Children are naturally attracted to patterns. Coloured blocks provide a good opportunity for exploring patterns together.

Ask your child to describe the patterns she is making. For example, she might have her blocks lined up as "red, blue, red, blue..." Try building the pattern together. As your child gets older, the patterns may become more complicated.

Try making and noticing other patterns together – use toys, clothes, nature, animals and people. Once children start recognizing patterns on their own, you can try some prediction and memory games. Shared reading is a perfect opportunity for these activities. With a book that hasn't been read before, look at the cover and ask "What do you think this book is about?" Later, you can ask "What do you think will happen next?" With a familiar book, try asking "Do you remember what happens after the duckling learns to swim?" Reading a favourite book over and over helps your child to learn the pattern of a story and the patterns of language.

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TOPIC 14

Predict

Definition

Predict means to figure out what will happen next or in the future, based on what you already know.

Examples

- Infants reach for the key on the toy piano to make the musical people play.
- Toddlers predict that you will clean up the cereal they throw on the floor.
- Preschoolers share their blocks in hopes that their playmates will share their stuffed animals.
- Preschoolers predict that when the doorbell rings, someone is at the door.
- Parents are able to predict their child's tantrum before it occurs.

Key messages

- Being able to predict what will happen gives children a sense of security and well-being.
- Children's ability to predict develops naturally when their daily life is consistent and routines run smoothly.

About predicting

For children, being able to predict what will happen gives comfort, security and control. It frees them from worrying about their basic needs and lets them focus on the work of learning and enjoying life. When children can predict their parents' positive responses or their teacher's encouragement, they can confidently make decisions about their actions.

Prediction helps children to know how their actions affect others. It helps them to develop conversational skills, gain self-control and build confidence.

Children are learning how to interact with other children and adults in appropriate ways. As they develop the ability to predict the results of their actions, they learn that good behaviour gets better results – for example, that sharing toys will be reciprocated.

How does predicting affect children's lifelong learning?

Prediction allows us to plan ahead and be more in control of our lives. Every time we make a plan, we are predicting. In school, being able to predict what's going to happen next and what's required of you as a student helps you to stay organized, develop good study habits and take responsibility for your own school work.

Prediction plays a major role in understanding what we read. Good readers are always predicting what will come next – in the sentence and in the story. Prediction also helps us to figure out words we don't know.

Activity to do with children

Predicting

Notice how your child predicts the events in her daily routine. After a nap, she might say to you "It's snack time." Draw her attention to predictions by supporting and encouraging them, for example, "Wow! You know it's snack time because we always have a snack after your nap."

Once your child has a basic understanding of prediction, try asking questions about other activities, like "What will we see on the way to Grandma and Grandpa's house?" or "What will happen after we get home from kindergarten?"

As your child develops a sense of how stories work, try some prediction while you read together. Try thinking out loud as you read – "I wonder what this book is about" or "What do you think is going to happen to this little pig?"

TOPIC 15

Main Idea

Definition

The main idea is the "point" of a story, conversation or set of instructions.

Examples

- Infants reach for a toy several times before being able to grab it.
- Toddlers can follow simple instructions.
- Preschoolers can carry on a conversation with you about the animals they saw at the zoo today.
- Preschoolers can tell you all about what a particular character did in the latest episode of their favourite TV program.
- Parents hope that their children can get the main idea about things, such as the connection between their behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour.

Key messages

- Every task, story and conversation has a main idea or purpose.
- A bigger goal or main idea can be reached by setting smaller goals or main ideas.
- Adults can model main idea in their conversations, directions and actions and by reading stories.

About main idea

The main idea is the most important piece of information. We communicate a main idea by telling a story, having a conversation or giving instructions.

A child needs to understand main idea to communicate well and to give and follow directions. Children develop the ability to follow directions gradually. Start with simple one-step instructions and work your way up to three or four slowly. For example, when you ask your child to go to the kitchen and get you a spoon, he has to understand that bringing you the spoon is the main idea, point or purpose of the task. Otherwise, he might get a fork, or forget altogether.

Young children often have trouble "sticking to the point" when they are trying to tell you something. You can help young children stick to the point of the story they are telling by gently directing them back to the main idea. You can do this by asking open-ended questions like "What happened to the frog?" or "How did James find his way home?"

Understanding the main idea of a story or conversation helps children to communicate more clearly and get the point across. When you read to children, they learn how a story works – that it has a beginning, a middle and an end – and that it has a main idea. Talk about the story and what the main idea is.

How does understanding main idea affect children's lifelong learning?

Understanding the main idea means that we don't have to know every detail about something in order to use it. It also helps us to see the connections between people, places and things. Children need to understand the main idea to communicate well. Understanding the main idea is also needed to give and follow directions. Narrative or informational prose contains both a main idea and supporting ideas. Being able to see the main idea is essential to understanding what they read.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Making the bed

The main idea of this activity is to make the bed. Making the bed is accomplished in several steps.

Choose your first step and describe it. For example, "Let's pull up the sheets together." Ask your child to choose the next step. He might say "Put the pillows on the bed" or "Put the stuffed animals on the bed." Continue like this until the bed is made.

After a while, your child will be able to follow two, then three instructions – "Pull up the sheet, straighten the blanket and put the pillows on." Eventually, he'll get the main idea and make the bed on his own.

Ask your child "What did we just do?" When he says "We made the bed," he's got the main idea!

You can help your child by saying "We just made the bed together. What a great job!" The two of you can try this with all kinds of tasks, from making muffins to tidying up toys. Don't forget to compliment your child on his or her part in doing the activity.

TOPIC 16

Understanding Pictures

Definition

Understanding a picture means looking at or creating a picture and getting meaning from it.

Examples

- Infants can distinguish pictures of their mother's face from any other face (Bee, 1992).
- Toddlers may have a favourite book that they like to touch, look at and hold.
- Toddlers look at pictures of themselves and their family and show that they recognize themselves by pointing or smiling.
- Preschoolers make "maps" in the sand for their cars, trucks and bulldozers.
- Parents bring out their photo album and talk about their childhood with their children.

Key messages

- You can help children's understanding by modelling thinking out loud while looking at pictures together.
- You can support children's visual and comprehension skills by exploring pictures together.

About understanding pictures

Pictures help us to understand information by presenting it in a direct and simplified way. They help us understand prose. Pictures sometimes express feelings and thoughts that can't be put into words. Pictures can be drawings, photos, paintings, maps, charts, graphs, plans and diagrams.

Babies like a few pictures placed close enough for them to see. Change them often.

Looking at a picture can help your child understand and remember a story. Children who have trouble visualizing will understand more if they talk about pictures while looking at them.

Look at books and talk about pictures with toddlers. Enjoy a book together in whatever way or order they want. Also, enjoy painting or drawing together and talking about it.

Children who draw their own pictures develop their visualization skills. Sometimes they create works of art on walls and furniture. Make sure you have lots of paper and other supplies on hand and that your child can find them easily when the artistic spirit takes over!

How does understanding pictures affect children's lifelong learning?

Understanding pictures is an essential lifelong skill. We need to "read" pictures all the time. We read the symbols on rest room doors, the warning symbols on cleaning products, and maps that tell us where to go. The skills we use to read pictures are the same as those we use to read printed words.

House plans, road maps, graphs and charts are all pictures. In the world of work, we have to be able to understand what these pictures are saying. Pictures speak to a different part of our brain than words, and may help us gain a more complete "picture" of an idea or a concept. The ability to understand pictures will also help children to appreciate and learn from the visual arts.

ACTIVITY
to do with children

Looking at books

You can practise understanding pictures together when you look at any book with illustrations. Use topics in this module like Observe, and Compare and Contrast, to talk about what you see in a picture.

With a younger child, multisensory books are great, so you can touch, smell and look at lots of different things. If he doesn't talk yet, you can model by thinking out loud about what you see and by labelling things in the picture when he points. An older child will make observations, ask questions and try to predict what will happen next.

As you look at the illustrations, ask and answer questions, like "What's happening?" "Who is in the picture?" "I wonder what will happen next?"

When you do this activity, you are building children's vocabulary, prior knowledge and understanding of concepts and stories. Looking at pictures builds their "visual library" – it helps them to visualize new objects and concepts.

TOPIC 17

Real and Pretend

Definition

Real is factual. Pretend is make believe.

Examples

- Babies' reality is what they can see, hear, smell, touch and taste. (*real*)
- Toddlers feed their doll with a toy spoon. (*pretend*)
- Preschoolers pretend that a stick is a horse, a magic wand and a snake. (*pretend*)
- Older preschoolers know that when they are role playing, they are pretending. (*real*)
- Parents will often say things are okay even when they are dealing with tough issues. (*pretend*)

Key messages

- Young children do not have enough prior knowledge to know the difference between real and pretend.
- It is important to model critical thinking and monitor and discuss children's TV watching.
- Children need to be reassured that most of what they see on TV is not real.

About real and pretend

Pretending is part of how children learn. When they play doctor and patient, or pretend that a cardboard box is a car, children are learning social skills as well as processing information.

It is important for children to understand what is real and what is pretend. Today's children are exposed to TV and movies which often have violent or explicit subject matter. As a parent, you will want to set limits based on your own values, but we can't always control what children see and hear. What we can do is talk about it. Children need reassurance that their world is safe and to know that violence hurts people.

Here are some examples of how children's sense of real and make-believe develops over time:

- At age 12 to 14 months, children use a toy for its real purpose, like drinking imaginary juice from a toy cup.
- At age 15 to 21 months, children start feeding imaginary juice or a bottle to a doll, often mimicking the way their parents interact with them.

- At age 2 or 3 years, children use one object to represent another, like pretending that a block is a truck or a pot is a hat.
- From 3 to 4 years old, children begin playing roles and acting out situations, like teacher and student, parent and child, store clerk and customer.
- At about 5 or 6 years old, children are aware that they are "playing" roles and will often assign roles before play begins, trading roles intentionally and planning the action.

How will understanding real and pretend affect children's lifelong learning?

Understanding what is real and what is pretend is essential to all the other thinking processes. Before children can compare and contrast, predict, label, categorize, see cause and effect, and make decisions, they must be able to think critically and distinguish fact from fiction. This leads to well-thought out opinions and values. The more ability that children have to critically distinguish fact from fiction, the more they will be able to see the difference between the two – for example, on TV, on the radio, in advertising, in magazines, on the Internet.

ACTIVITY
to do with children

Watching TV

TV can be fun, entertaining and educational. It can also be violent or sexually explicit. Take the time to watch appropriate programs with your child and discuss what you see and hear. Encourage your child to comment on what he sees on TV.

If the child happens to be watching a TV program when a character is punched, kicked or shot, point out that in "real life" people are badly hurt by these things. Try asking questions like "How would you feel if that happened to you?" or "What do you think really happened?" They need to know that real violence is harmful.

With commercials, you might say "They sure make toys look better on TV. That toy truck can't really jump over all those rocks." When Superman jumps off a building, you might say "That was neat! How do you think they make it look like he's flying?" Encourage children to ask questions about stunts, special effects, and products that they see on TV.

1 Share Learning Experiences

Invite participants to share some things that have happened with their children over the past week. How were these things learning experiences?

As participants share, make connections between these experiences and the topics you have discussed. By framing these experiences within a learning context, participants will see that they don't have to be teachers in a school set up at home. They just need to be aware of – and take advantage of – all natural opportunities for learning. Point out that participants are giving their children enriched learning every day.

Explore the enriched learning that is taking place every day:

- What did your child seem to be learning on his own?
- What do you think your child is learning from you?
- What are you learning from your child?
- How are you using PAT in your everyday activities?

2 Discuss Life Management Topic

Turn to the life management section at the back of the Participant Resource (page 147) and choose one topic. Lead an informal discussion.

Space is provided below for you to prepare several questions to get participants talking and to help you keep the discussion on track.

Life Management Topic ______________________

Questions ______________________

____

____

3 Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

Explain that doing the hands-on learning activities will bring the topics to life.

This week's topics and learning activities are:

CYCLE #1
Topic 18: Label
Topic 19: Categorize
Learning Activity – *Who Am I?*

CYCLE #2
Topic 20: Cause and Effect
Learning Activity – *If...Then*

CYCLE #3
Topic 21: Sequence
Learning Activity – *First, Second, Third*

CYCLE #4
Topic 22: Prioritize
Learning Activity – *Priorities*

CYCLE #5
Topic 23: Fact and Opinion
Topic 24: Making Decisions
Learning Activity – *Snack Time*

4 Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

In this step, you will take the participants through the Experiencing Learning Cycle five times. To help you do this, the three stages are graphically identified both here and on the Experiencing Learning Cycle poster.

BRIEFING LEARNING ACTIVITY DEBRIEFING

1

BRIEFING

TOPIC 18

Label

(page 57, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some labels or names you can think of?

Examples: What are some new labels or names your children have recently learned?

Key Messages: What is an example of one thing that can have several labels?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 19

Categorize

(page 59, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Can you think of some examples of categorizing?

Examples: What other examples can you share from your own experience?

Key Messages: How do you find words in a dictionary? (In a dictionary, the category is alphabetization – such as words that start with "a.") What other categories do you use to find things when you need them? When we are able to place something into a category, we often find that we already know things about it. For example, once we know a person is a doctor, we are able to connect that information to all our prior knowledge about doctors – so we know quite a bit about that person before we even meet her.

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Who Am I?

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants discuss the topics, then explore materials.

Purpose
- To explore the concepts of labelling and categorizing
- To experience the PAT model

Materials
- several pads of stick-on notes
- markers or pens

Activity
Have participants work in pairs.

Provide each pair with a bunch of stick-on notes. Have participants start by asking each other their names, printing them and sticking them on each other.

Allow participants to learn more about each other. How many labels describing the other person can they stick on each other?

Teach. Ask participants if they now know more about the people they shared this activity with. Point out that once we can attach a name or label to something, we can connect it to all our prior knowledge. For example, if someone is labelled a teacher, then we know more about that person because they are placed into the category of "teachers."

Ask if anyone remembers the definition of a category – a group of things that are the same in some way.

Ask anyone who is wearing the label "mother" to move to one corner of the room. This is the category of "mothers."

Ask someone to read another one of their labels (for example, "good cook").

Ask all participants who have the same label to move to another corner of the room. Continue with several more examples, having participants move from one category to another around the room. Each of the labels names a category into which people can be grouped.

Sorting things into categories helps us to organize, remember and find things. We categorize our papers by putting them in alphabetical order so we will be able to find them later – we can find the ice cream in the supermarket because we know it is in the category of things that are kept in the freezer.

Ask participants to share some activities they could use to help children with the concept of categories. (For example: Let's sort all the stuffed toys into the hamper. Let's sort these things into things that float and things that sink.)

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- What do you feel and think about the experience?
- Why are the topics important for children's learning development?
- How can you apply the topics with children?

2

BRIEFING

TOPIC 20

Cause and Effect

(page 61, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Can you think of some examples of cause and effect?

Examples: Note that the key words in cause and effect are "if...then."

Key Messages: What examples can you share of how understanding cause and effect in personal relationships gives a person control over his or her life? Understanding the effect that your actions will have helps you decide how you will act. If you control how you act, then you can also control the effect of your action. For example, you know that if you praise your friend, then he will be pleased. You can act according to the effect you want.

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key message before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

If... Then

Teaching Approach: Talk Then Do
Participants discuss the topic, then explore materials.

Purpose

- to show participants that understanding cause and effect empowers us. If we understand that we can control the effect by controlling the cause (our actions), we can make better choices and manage our lives more effectively.

Materials

- none

Activity

Ask participants to work in groups. Have them talk about the many cause-and-effect situations they share with their children every day.

When children inquire and explore, when they want to know "why," they are trying to understand cause-and-effect relationships.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- What do you feel and think about the experience?
- Why are the topics important for children's learning development?
- How can you apply the topics with children?

3

BRIEFING

TOPIC 21

Sequence

(page 63, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What do we mean by "ordinal numbers" (first, second, third, etc.)? Ordinal numbers should be used when describing a sequence.

Examples: What are some things you do in sequence?

Key Messages: What everyday opportunities do you have to discuss sequence with children? Some examples are putting toys away, setting the table, taking a bath and getting ready for bed.

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key message before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

First, Second, Third

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topic while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to provide strategies for teaching sequencing to children
- to become familiar with using ordinal numbers for sequential activities
- to show how daily activities can become learning experiences

Materials

- none

Activity

Ask participants to choose a partner and take turns being parent and child as they role play any sequential activity they frequently do with a child, such as putting toys away, setting the table, making the bed, getting dressed.

As participants role play, remind them to use ordinal numbers in sequence – "First, we..., second, we.... Give the partners time to do two different sequences, so they both have an opportunity to play the role of parent and child.

Discuss the difference between sequence, and cause and effect. For example, putting on your socks does not cause you to put on your shoes; opening your mouth does not cause you to brush your teeth.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

4

BRIEFING

TOPIC 22

Prioritize

(page 65, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Can you think of an example of prioritizing based on preference and one example of prioritizing based on importance?

Examples: Which examples show prioritizing based on preference or on importance?

Key Messages: When have your children's priorities not been the same as yours?

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Priorities

Teaching Approach: Do and Talk
Lead the group in an interactive discussion about the topic while participants do the activity.

Purpose
- to understand the prioritize topic

Materials
- selection of books or magazines

Activity
Ask a participant to prioritize three books or magazines by choosing the one she would prefer to read. Then ask her to select the book or magazine she would choose next, then her least favourite.

Ask another participant to indicate his preferences. Are they the same? Probably not. Discuss the fact that different people often have different priorities because they have different preferences. Ask parents to talk about how this applies to their children.

Have participants imagine a situation where someone in the group faints and falls on the floor. What are people's priorities now? Reading magazines? No, everyone's priority would be to help the sick person, because it is more important. Discuss other examples of prioritizing based on importance.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

5

BRIEFING

TOPIC 23

Fact and Opinion

(page 67, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: How we are sometimes fooled into accepting an opinion as a fact?

Examples: What kind of opinions do your children have?

Key Messages: How do you influence your children's opinions?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 24

Making Decisions

(page 69, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What is involved in making a decision?

Examples: What decision have you recently made concerning your child?

Key Messages: What might be an age-appropriate choice for a 2-year-old, a 4-year-old, a 5-year-old?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Snack Time

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do

Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topics while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to become more aware of how people form opinions and make decisions
- to emphasize that children need many opportunities to make age-appropriate decisions

Materials

- a variety of snacks that participants have brought to share.

Ask participants to observe the snacks and make statements that they know are facts. For example, those cookies are round, that fudge is sweet. Ask how we can be sure a fact is a fact. Remind participants that children are constantly curious to know more facts – what adults take for granted is new and exciting to children.

Ask participants to share their opinions about the snacks, for example, "I think chocolate cake is the best snack." "Potato chips taste the best." Ask participants if they can tell why they have that opinion.

Opinions are based on our own personal values. Sometimes opinions are presented to us as facts, so we need strategies to question what we are told. Mistaking an opinion for a fact can limit our learning and misinform us.

Ask participants what snack they want to eat and how they made their choice. We make decisions based on our understanding of the facts (using our prior knowledge) and the opinions we have formed about the facts (using our values). We also use thinking processes such as observe, compare and contrast, predict, prioritize, and cause and effect.

Children need many opportunities to practise making age-appropriate choices so they will have the strategies needed to make wise choices as they get older.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

5 Make the Most of the Participant Resource

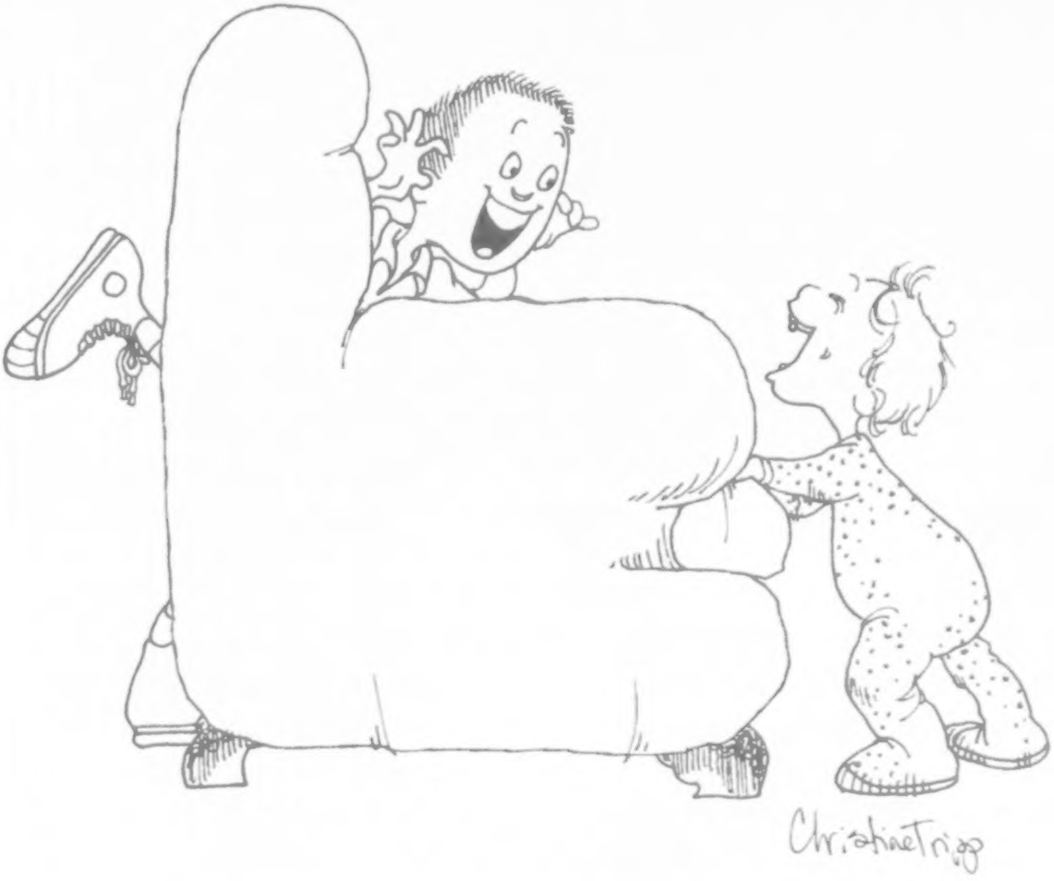
During most of the workshop, participants learn by doing the activities rather than by reading the information in the Participant Resource. Based on your own preference and that of the group, choose a topic from this workshop to further explore in the Participant Resource. Turn to the section and lead an informal discussion. Repeat for other topics if you have the time.

Encourage parents to use the Participant Resource at home to:

- review the topics
- get more information
- get ideas for learning activities with children
- share their new knowledge with friends

MODULE FOUR

More About Process of Thinking


Christine Tripp

Introduction

The topics in this module show how you can provide everyday opportunities to develop and enrich your child's thinking ability.

More About Process of Thinking Topics

Topic 18: Label
Topic 19: Categorize
Topic 20: Cause and Effect
Topic 21: Sequence
Topic 22: Prioritize
Topic 23: Fact and Opinion
Topic 24: Making Decisions

TOPIC 18

Label

Definition

Labelling is giving a name or description to an object or an idea that places it in a certain category.

Examples

- Babies hear parents naming objects daily, like bottle, toes, bath, bunny, Mom and Dad.
- Toddlers begin to label when they point at objects and ask "That?" The new words parents use add to their vocabulary.
- Preschoolers observe differences between each other and label them: "Has a tall Daddy." "Has a big sister." "Doesn't like milk." "Has a Spiderman lunchbox."
- Parents label when they introduce a new food, and say "Here is a peach. It tastes good!"

Key messages

- Labels help children to identify, organize, understand and remember information.
- One thing can have several labels.
- Some labels can limit our understanding and hurt other people.

About labelling

When children know the names for things, they can identify, organize, understand and remember the world around them. They can place people and things into categories based on their prior knowledge and apply this information to new experiences.

Some labels apply to characteristics that are evident, like male and female. Some apply to characteristics that may not be evident, like mother, singer, teacher, learning disabled. Labels can be harmful when they discriminate or insult.

At about 18 months, children begin a sort of naming explosion. They want to know the names of all kinds of objects, often pointing to them so that you can label, for example, tree, dog, girl, juice, crayon.

A preschooler is forming attitudes and values about the world, and the labels your child hears and sees will reflect these attitudes and values. If your preschooler sees a female fixing the sink, she will know that she can fix things. If your preschooler's favourite teacher in his child care program is a male, he will know that he can do that kind of job some day.

How does labelling affect children's lifelong learning?

Giving a name or label to something helps children build their vocabulary. Most early language and vocabulary development consists of labelling. It is also how we continue to develop our vocabulary as we get older.

Very young children sometimes notice differences between people, but they are a lot less likely than adults to judge someone based on those differences.

ACTIVITY
to do with children

Sticky notes

To label something, you have to know enough language to give it a name. Categories will become clearer as children learn to label and as their experiences expand.

Play a name game with your child. Ask her "What's your name?" When she answers, print it on a sticky note and stick it on her.

Next, ask "What's my name?" The answer will probably be something like Mom, Dad, Nanny or Susan, depending on your relationship to the child. Print this "name" for yourself and have her stick it on you.

Ask your child what other names or labels she has. Model some examples, like "little girl" or a nickname. Think of other names for each other and stick them on.

You may want to talk with your child about names or labels that are untrue or hurtful. Some children are very sensitive to this and others.

TOPIC 19

Categorize

Definition

Categorizing is grouping things that are the same in some way.

Example

- A baby quickly learns to categorize faces into two groups – Mommy and not Mommy.
- A toddler puts toys into one category – Mine!
- A child learns to categorize other people – friends, family, strangers, caregivers.
- A child is allowed to choose a pet based on categories – small, furry, quiet, easy care.
- Parents can categorize activities as being safe or not safe for their children.

Key messages

- Things in a category are the same in some way.
- Things can go into more than one category.
- Putting things in categories helps children to remember and use information.
- Children's prior knowledge about things in a category helps them to understand new things that fit into the same category.

About categorizing

When we can put something into a category, we know a lot about it based on what we already know about that category. For example, if a building belongs in the category of "restaurants," we know that we can eat food there.

Sorting things into categories helps children to organize, remember and use information. If a child knows that a "lion" belongs in the category "cat," she will find she already knows many things about lions.

Infants are gathering information and checking people out all the time. A child who suddenly becomes shy around new people, or even people she doesn't see very often, is simply starting to categorize others as known and unknown. Think of it as a built-in safety feature. A little later, categorization helps children to form strong opinions about all kinds of things: "I hate green food." "Five-year-olds are big kids."

How does categorizing affect children's lifelong learning?

Categorization is important. It is directly linked to comprehension. To help understand what they are reading, children sort ideas into categories, for example, fact and opinion, relevant and irrelevant, "good guys" and "bad guys," true stories and fiction.

As children become more independent, categorization is essential for making appropriate choices, like knowing the difference between friends and strangers and things that can or cannot be eaten.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Toys

You'll discover many categorizing activities during your day-to-day routines with your child – sorting laundry, putting the dishes away, grocery shopping, sorting coins. This activity uses toys.

When it's time to tidy up, try categorizing toys as you and your child put them away. As you put things away, use language like "This toy goes in the toybox" or "on the shelf" or "in the bath toy bin." An older child might talk about categories on his own with a little encouragement. The important thing is to talk about them while doing the activity.

To show that things can belong to more than one group, encourage your child to think of other categories, like red toys, soft toys or toys that make sounds.

TOPIC 20

Cause and Effect

Definition

Cause and effect is a relationship where a condition or event makes another condition or event happen.

Examples

- If infants cry, they usually need to be changed, nursed, cuddled, burped or fed.
- Toddlers know that if they can reach the counter, they can get the cookie on it.
- 3-year-olds learn that if they wash their hands, the finger paint will come off.
- Parents know that when the baby gate is secure, their child is safe.

Key messages

- When children understand cause and effect, they gain more control over the choices they make.
- Children need to learn about cause and effect in an environment that is safe for free exploration.

About cause and effect

Understanding cause and effect begins at an early age. Babies learn that crying (the cause) means you will come and take care of their discomfort (the effect).

Later, understanding cause and effect gives children control over their choices. An extreme example is when a child touches a hot surface and is burned.

Young children need to test boundaries to learn about cause and effect to build their prior knowledge. This means trying everything from eating soap to opening doors just to see what will happen. A 4-year-old who is curious about touching a fish might decide to reach into the tank, because touching the fish is the most important thing at that time.

Control over choices leads to feelings of independence and self-confidence, and allows children to take part in setting their own limits. Adults can help by making the connection between the cause and the effect. Children need explanations and reminders. They also need to know what their options are. Often, children know what **not** to do, but don't know what they **can** do instead.

Cause and effect is also an important part of relationships between people. Learning what to say and do affects others and helps us to develop empathy and build friendships.

How does cause and effect affect children's lifelong learning?

Life is full of choices. When exploring the relationship between cause and effect, children are exploring possibilities, examining the possible causes of an effect and predicting the possible effects from a cause.

Cause and effect governs all choices we make in life. Allowing children to explore cause and effect allows them to understand the logical and natural consequences of what they do. From their successes and mistakes, they learn about what they can control in their lives. Allowing children to explore cause and effect also helps them to learn to make responsible choices for themselves and others.

When children go to school, they start to take responsibility for assignments, homework, study habits and behaviour. Knowing what you do today will affect what you do tomorrow is essential to planning ahead. Later, the ability to see cause and effect will be a valuable skill in the workplace.

Science, social studies, math and the arts are devoted to inquiring, exploring, discovering and making connections about cause and effect relationships.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Water play

Making sure your child is closely supervised, try some water play in the kitchen sink. Water is fun and easy to manipulate, creating lots of effects.

Fill the sink with water. Ask "I wonder what will happen if we pull out the plug?" Have your child pull it and watch. Reinforce the effect by saying "If you pull out the plug, the water goes down the drain."

Refill the sink. Let your child add some dish soap to the water. Ask "I wonder what will happen if you stir it?" Have him use a whisk or wooden spoon to froth up the bubbles. At this point, if your child hasn't already said it, say "If you stir the water, then it gets all bubbly!"

Children can cause more effects in the water with plastic cups, a sieve, rocks or a small watering can. They'll come up with lots of things to try. Keep pointing out the relationship between the cause and the effect.

Remember to always set safe boundaries for this activity.

TOPIC 21

Sequence

Definition

Sequencing is ordering things or events so that one follows another.

Examples

- An infant's life is a series of routines or sequences: being hungry, being fed, being burped, being cuddled, being changed, being put down for a nap.
- A toddler learns to take off clothes before getting into the bathtub.
- A child gives Daddy a hard time for skipping pages in a favourite book because the sequence of the story has been interrupted.
- Preschoolers take turns on the slide: first Jamal, then Mark, then Chris, then Jamal again...
- Parents teach their children to brush their teeth in a sequence. First "Put the toothpaste on the brush." Second "Open your mouth." Third "Brush your teeth." Fourth "Rinse your mouth." Fifth "Rinse your mouth again." Sixth "Put the toothbrush away."

Key messages

- When one thing follows another, it is a sequence.
- It is important to use "first," "second," "third," etc. when talking about sequence with children.
- When things or events are in a sequence, there is not necessarily a cause and effect relationship.

About sequencing

Everything we do has a sequence. Words are placed in a particular sequence to make a sentence. Some things have to be done in a particular sequence, like opening our mouthes before brushing our teeth. Sometimes we have a choice in the order of things we do, like having the salad before or after the main course. Some things can be put in random sequence, like a list of things to do.

Understanding sequence helps us to remember and follow directions. Ordinal numbers (like "order") – first, second, third, fourth – are what we use to describe sequence. Cardinal numbers – 1, 2, 3, 4 –

which really mean an amount of something, are sometimes used as "shorthand" for ordinal numbers.

Stacking blocks is one way children begin to learn about sequence. A little later, preschoolers begin to follow two- or three-step directions, like "First, pick out a book you want to read together. Second, come and sit with me on the couch."

Children naturally develop an understanding of sequence by watching you (modelling) and through trial and error. Your 3-year-old might have to try buttoning his shirt several times before making the correct matches.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Getting dressed

When you're helping your child get dressed, it's a great opportunity to talk about and use the concept of sequencing together.

Lay out clothes so you can both see them. With a young child, you could say "First, put on your underwear. Second, put on your socks...," etc. With an older child, you could ask "What do you put on first?" "What do you put on second?"

The important part is to model using sequence and to let your child participate in deciding what the sequence should be. Watch for sequences in other daily routines and special events. Practically everything we do and say forms a sequence.

What are some sequences your child follows each day without even being taught?

How does sequencing affect children's lifelong learning?

Understanding and using sequence in our everyday lives helps us to do things more effectively and efficiently, no matter what our age. Following a sequence saves time and energy by organizing an activity into specific steps. Once we have done something a few times, the steps become automatic. We don't have to think about each part of a task. Being able to do something automatically allows us to do more than one thing at a time – for example, talking on the phone while getting dressed.

When we understand how words in a certain sequence form a sentence and how sentences and paragraphs in a certain sequence tell a story, we understand what we read. Sequence is a basic part of math and science, too. Imagine trying to do math if you did not understand the sequence of 1 to 10!

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TOPIC 22

Prioritize

Definition

Prioritizing is putting objects, people, events or actions in order of importance.

Examples

- Infants' basic needs for food, sleep, comfort and love are top priority.
- Toddlers might grab a toy away from another child because having the toy at that moment is their priority.
- Preschoolers may begin to set priorities by choosing when to put on their pajamas – before or after brushing their teeth.
- Preschoolers understand that they have to wash their hands before eating.
- Many parents will have to choose between staying at home with their child if she is sick, or finding a caregiver.

Key messages

- There is a difference between prioritizing according to preference and according to importance.
- All people prioritize according to their own values, so your child might not share your priorities.

About prioritizing

How we set priorities is personal. It is based on our own values – on what we want or think is important. Sometimes what we want the most or like the best is not the most important. You might really want to go to a party tonight, but you don't have a babysitter. Of course, it's more important to stay home and look after your child than it is to go out.

When we prioritize, we use many thinking topics, like Predict, Cause and Effect, Sequence, and Making Decisions. We learn to put what is important (for us and for others) before what we want at the moment. Children prioritize differently from adults, but the basic skill is the same. Children who learn to prioritize are more able to make appropriate choices. Here is how children prioritize at various ages:

- For infants, almost every need is urgent, including feeding, cuddling, talking and playing.

- Toddlers prioritize themselves. When they say "Mine!" and "Me first!" they are letting you know that they have discovered their new, most important person – "Me."
- Preschoolers understand priorities if you explain the reason – "It's important to wash your hands after you use the bathroom because it keeps the germs away and keeps us healthy."

How does prioritizing affect children's lifelong learning?

Different people have different priorities. What's important to you might not be important to others. When priorities are in conflict with other people, we usually negotiate and compromise to reach a good decision for everyone.

Often, we have a conflict of priorities within ourselves. For example, sometimes we choose to do the housework before settling in with the latest copy of a favourite magazine. This type of prioritizing is important as we get older, because it allows us to make decisions based on what's important to us.

We can also prioritize someone else's needs ahead of our own, like when we donate money to a charity.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Choosing snacks

Set out three nutritious snack foods (enough for you and your child), like apple slices, carrot sticks and crackers. Let your child choose the one she wants to eat first. Ask "Which one do you want to eat first?" "Which one do you like the best?"

Then, let her eat her second choice, then her third choice. Your child has just prioritized based on her preference. Share your preferences, for example, by saying "I like the apple the best because it tastes sweet" or "I pick the cracker first because it's crunchy."

Prioritizing in the above activity is based on preference.

Other priorities are based upon importance. For example, children want to do things they like to do, but sometimes they are not aware of the dangers involved. When a child is about to ride a tricycle across the street, say something like "I know you like to ride your tricycle. But I do not want you to ride it across the street because you could get hit by a car and hurt. It's more important for you to be safe and stay in the driveway."

TOPIC 23

Fact and Opinion

Definition

A fact is a statement that can be proven true. An opinion is a personal belief or judgement about something.

Example

- Babies recognize their parents' voices in the room.
- Toddlers may go through a period of wanting to eat only one or two "favourite" foods.
- A 3-year-old wants to choose her own clothes and won't wear certain things.
- A preschooler knows it's not safe to play in the road.
- An adult knows that a spider has eight legs. Some adults are of the opinion that spiders are scary.

Key messages

- There is a difference between fact and opinion.
- There are ways to encourage children to learn facts and form opinions.
- The more facts children have, the better they are able to develop informed opinions.

About fact and opinion

Discovering facts is a child's job and joy. Encourage children to distinguish between fact and opinion, and to think independently. Confusing facts and opinions can limit learning.

It's okay to challenge facts. Most of what we see, hear and read about comes through someone else's personal filter, which is based on their values and beliefs. When you encourage your children to ask questions, you are encouraging them to find out the difference between fact and opinion.

Forming opinions is part of developing each child's unique personality. Children and parents don't always share the same opinions, for example, when bedtime should be and what foods taste good. However, believing another person's opinion without questioning it prevents children from finding things out for themselves. Opinions that discriminate against others, like racism, sexism and homophobia, can be very harmful.

How does understanding fact and opinion affect children's lifelong learning?

Opinions are not right or wrong. They reflect what we know – the facts – combined with our values and beliefs. The values and beliefs of parents, siblings, friends, teachers, co-workers and peers influence us. We then form our own opinions.

Much of the reading children do in school is fact-based. Many assignments ask students to look for answers to "fact" questions. To fully comprehend what you read, you need to be able to tell the difference between fact and opinion. You also need to check your facts by questioning, reading more, and getting information through personal experience.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Asking for facts and opinions

Many children like to pick out their own clothes. When your child chooses something, ask him the facts about that piece of clothing, "What colour is it?" "How does it feel?" "Is it warm?"

Then ask for his opinion, "Do you like it?" "What do you like best about it?" "Is it your favourite?" Be prepared to let him wear what he's picked out!

Try this with food, books, toys, people, animals, music and just about anything else. Point out facts, express your own opinions and ask for your children's opinions when you read, watch TV or talk together.

TOPIC 24

Making Decisions

Definition

Making decisions means making a choice based on your prior knowledge, values and thinking strategies.

Example

- Babies prefer to be held by their mother because this fufils two of their basic needs – for food and for love.
- Toddlers decide to eat their carrots and throw their peas on the floor because orange is better than green.
- 3-year-olds choose a stuffed animal to take to bed based on cuddliness and familiarity.
- 5-year-olds decide who to invite to their birthday party, what games to play and what kind of cake they want.
- Adults help their children choose what to wear based on the weather and what they will be doing.

Key messages

- You can give your children opportunities to make age-appropriate choices.
- You can model the decision-making process by example and by thinking out loud.
- You can coach your children in the decision-making process when it's appropriate.

About making decisions

Making decisions is a part of daily life. Children need lots of practice making good choices and decisions, starting when they are very young.

Decisions have consequences, either positive or negative. Even a decision as simple as deciding to wear your blue socks today means that you can't wear your green socks. With practice, over time, your child learns to make effective decisions that have positive consequences.

Toddlers make decisions based on their likes and dislikes. It's more of a response than a process. Later, you can give your children opportunities to make age-appropriate choices, like what to give as a birthday gift for a friend or what to take to school for snacktime. This gives children a sense of control over their life.

A 5-year-old who wants to wear brand new shoes outside in snowy weather is ready to learn some decision-making skills. Remind her of what she already knows – it is cold and snowy outside. Point out the possible consequences – the shoes could be ruined, she could get sick. Does she still want to wear them?

How does making decisions affect children's lifelong learning?

Children will be making decisions all their lives. When you model and guide the process of decision making, they develop the ability to make decisions for themselves.

Children who feel confident about making age-appropriate choices are likely to be able to make effective decisions that satisfy their needs and have positive consequences throughout life. The sense of control that comes from making decisions is essential to high self-esteem and life management.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Making an important decision

This activity can serve as a model for coaching your child through the decision-making process.

Choose a situation in which the outcome is important to your child and involve her in the decision-making process. Choosing a pet, planning a birthday party, selecting clothes or deciding which toy to buy are great times to practise making decisions together.

Use prior knowledge. Talk with your child. What does she already know? Brainstorm about what she might want.

Gather new information. Find out as much as possible about the choice, for example, cost, care, and everything else you need to know, from books and the Internet, friends and stores.

Consider attitudes and values. What is your child's attitude? What can she take care of herself?

Use thinking strategies. Model and encourage your child to ask questions, compare and contrast, prioritize, and predict the effects that might result from making a particular choice. Afterwards, talk about whether or not it was a good choice.

1 Share Learning Experiences

Invite participants to share some things that have happened with their children over the past week. How were these things learning experiences?

As participants share, make connections between these experiences and the topics you have discussed. By framing these experiences within a learning context, participants will see that they don't have to be teachers in a school set up at home. They just need to be aware of – and take advantage of – all natural opportunities for learning. Point out that participants are giving their children enriched learning every day.

Explore the enriched learning that is taking place every day:
- What did your child seem to be learning on his own?
- What do you think your child is learning from you?
- What are you learning from your child?
- How are you using PAT in your everyday activities?

2 Discuss Life Management Topic

Turn to the life management section at the back of the Participant Resource (page 147) and choose one topic. Lead an informal discussion.

Space is provided below for you to prepare several questions to get participants talking and to help you keep the discussion on track.

Life Management Topic ____________________

Questions ____________________

____

____

3 Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

Explain that doing the hands-on learning activities will bring the topics to life.

This week's topics and learning activities are:

CYCLE #1
Topic 25: Communication
Learning Activity – *What Am I Saying?*

CYCLE #2
Topic 26: Important Factors
Learning Activity – *Put Yourself in Their Shoes*

CYCLE #3
Topic 27: How Language Develops
Learning Activity – *Who Are Our Children?*

CYCLE #4
Topic 28: Parents' Role in Language Development
Topic 29: Connecting with Your Child
Learning Activity – *My Child and I*

4 Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

In this step, you will take the participants through the Experiencing Learning Cycle four times. To help you do this, the three stages are graphically identified both here and on the Experiencing Learning Cycle poster.

BRIEFING   LEARNING ACTIVITY   DEBRIEFING

1

BRIEFING

TOPIC 25

Communication

(page 73, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Can you think of some examples of different ways of communicating?

Examples: Which kind of communication do you think you use the most?

Key Messages: Explain that the key messages will be discussed in more detail during the workshop.

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key message before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

What Am I Saying?

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topic while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to identify what message is being conveyed through non-verbal communication

Materials

- list of 12 examples of non-verbal communication (below)
- board or flipchart

Activity

Part One: Use non-verbal communication to convey the following 12 messages. Participants guess as quickly as possible what the messages are.

- beckoning with finger or hand ("Come here")
- waving hand away ("Go away")
- finger to mouth as if to say "sh-h-h-h" ("Quiet!")
- patting on the back with a big smile (pride, pleasure)
- standing with hands on hips with scowl on face (annoyance, anger)
- jumping up and down with legs crossed (need to use bathroom)
- taking someone by the hand and pulling the person along ("C'mon.")
- pouting (sad, disappointed)
- holding hand up ("Stop!")
- slouching and sighing (tired, dejected)
- thumbs up sign (Great job. Yes.)
- tapping fingers on table (impatience)

Part Two: Use verbal communication by asking the participants what they say when they want to praise their child. List these messages on a board or flipchart.

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DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

2

BRIEFING

TOPIC 26

Important Factors

(page 75, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Can you think of some time in the last few days when you wanted to communicate an idea to another person that did not involve talking?

Examples: Are any of the examples similar in any way to responses you gave to the last question?

Key Messages: Do you tend to use one way more than another or do you use a variety of ways to communicate?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

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LEARNING ACTIVITY

Put Yourself in Their Shoes

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topic while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to think about children's language development

Materials

- board or flipchart
- three markers or chalk of different colours
- tape
- four cards with the words
  - phonology (awareness of the sounds and sound patterns of our language)
  - syntactics (grammar)
  - semantics (meaning)
  - pragmatics (usage: knowing what language to use with different people)

Activity

Label the sections on a board or flipchart with the headings:

- infant
- 1–2 year-old
- 3–4 year-old
- 5–6 year-old
- 6–7 year-old

Have participants talk about the various ways in which children of these ages communicate. Write their responses under the appropriate age group. These are examples of how young children communicate.

Ask participants for some reasons why children communicate. Write these under the corresponding age groups, using a different coloured marker or chalk.

Ask participants for examples of the actual words and phrases that children use. Write these down under the corresponding age groups, again using a different coloured marker or chalk.

Use the written examples to demonstrate the four components of language. Tape each card up as you point out each component. For example, for the syntax (grammar) component you could compare a 1-year-old's message of "wawa" with a 3-year-old's "me want water" and a 5-year-old's "can I have a glass of water?"

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

3

BRIEFING

TOPIC 27

How Language Develops

(page 79, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: When did you first speak, listen, read and write to your children, or communicate with them through body language? We communicate in all these ways much earlier than we may realize.

Examples: What other examples can you share from your own experience?

Key Messages: What pattern have you noticed in your children's language development?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Who Are Our Children?

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topic while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to gain an idea of language development
- to think about where a child fits in the language development continuum

Materials

- Participant Resource, Topic 27, "About how language develops," page 80
- board or flipchart

Activity

Develop a group profile of children by drawing a long horizontal line (the continuum) on a board or to represent the ages from birth to age 6. Ask participants what their children's ages and names are. Write the names in the appropriate age "spots" on the line.

Have participants review and discuss the information on "About how language develops." Use the names and ages from the first part of the activity.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activities and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What do you feel and think about the experience?**
- **Why are the topics important for children's learning development?**
- **How can you apply the topics with children?**

4

BRIEFING

TOPIC 28

Parents' Role in Language Development

(page 83, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Explain that the main focus of this section is the importance of the parents' role in the development of their children's language.

Examples: The examples show the many ways in which participants can model language development. If possible, take a velcro ball to the workshop. Use four small pieces of coloured felt to represent each of the four examples. Stick a piece of felt onto the ball for each example as you read it. This demonstrates the role of parents adding to their children's "velcro ball" of language development.

Key Messages: What importance do you have in your children's language development? By the time children are 24 months old, they have learned most of the basics of the language, mostly from their parents.

TOPIC 29

Connecting with Children

(page 87, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: When in the past few days have you felt connected with your children?

Examples: In what other ways have you observed your children connect with their world?

Key Messages: What do you think of your role as parents in relation to these messages?

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LEARNING ACTIVITY

My Child and I

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topics while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to think about the ways in which participants connect with children
- to think about how these ways relate to language development

Materials

- blank paper and markers

Activity

Ask participants to draw a small picture of a child and themselves in the centre of the blank piece of paper. Have them write their name and the child's name near the picture.

Ask them to think about the different ways in which they connect with the child. Ask them to write these ways around the picture. Examples may include going to the park, reading a bedtime story, bathing, feeding, rocking, etc.

Discuss how these activities promote language development as well as emotional connectedness.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

5 Make the Most of the Participant Resource

During most of the workshop, participants learn by doing the activities rather than by reading the information in the Participant Resource. Based on your own preference and that of the group, choose a topic from this workshop to further explore in the Participant Resource. Turn to the section and lead an informal discussion. Repeat for other topics if you have the time.

Encourage parents to use the Participant Resource at home to:

- review the topics
- get more information
- get ideas for learning activities with children
- share their new knowledge with friends

MODULE FIVE

Language Development

Christine Tripp

Introduction

The ability to communicate using language is unique to humans. Language is a tool for thinking and for sharing our thoughts with others, and it can be learned only through interaction with others at a very early age. From birth to about age 4, a child's brain is especially receptive to learning language. It is important that children receive lots of language stimulation during these early years when the brain is ready to acquire language so easily.

The topics in this module give you an overview of how and when language develops. They also provide you with many ideas and activities to do with children to enhance their use of language.

Language development topics

Topic 25: Communication
Topic 26: Important Factors
Topic 27: How Language Develops
Topic 28: Parent's Role in Language
Topic 29: Connecting with Children

TOPIC 25

Communication

Definition

Communication is any way of relating to another person to convey or receive a message.

Examples

- Babies cry to communicate that their diaper is wet and uncomfortable.
- Toddlers let you know they don't like certain food by throwing their bowl on the floor.
- Preschoolers ask to be taken to the bathroom.
- Preschoolers discuss what colour of blocks to use to make their castle.
- You hug your child.

Key messages

- Talking is only one way of communicating.
- Communication can be verbal or non-verbal.
- Non-verbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, body language, writing and symbols.

Information about communication

We communicate from the moment we are born. There are two ways to communicate, verbal and non-verbal. Both are equally important.

When we think of communication, we tend to focus on language, but we all communicate in ways that do not always involve talking – over 90% of face-to-face communication is non-verbal (Wainwright,1993). The silent messages of body language often reveal more than the spoken word in conveying true feelings or attitudes.

Adults communicate messages to children using the language of gestures, facial expressions, eye movements, and so on. It is important that children receive positive messages that foster a sense of self-worth and a value of learning.

Children communicate to have their basic physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual needs met. Adults can foster self-worth, healthy relationships and enhance skill development by helping to develop their children's communication and language skills.

Crying is an infant's way of communicating that they need something, like food or a diaper change. Toddlers experiment with body language, checking the effect of different gestures, noises and faces on adults and other children. They are practising their communication skills.

Children are very direct in their communication. Sometimes they say things that may unintentionally embarrass you or others. Remember, they are simply expressing what they observe. If this happens, you may want to talk to them about the best time to tell you things they notice about people.

How does communication affect children's lifelong learning?

The ability to give and receive messages is essential to learning. Children who are encouraged to communicate and share their needs, thoughts and feelings learn that they can influence their environment. The sense of security fostered by healthy, reciprocal communication between adults and children allows children to feel safe to explore and learn about their world.

Communication is an exchange of ideas, feelings and information. In school and in the workplace, a person who feels confident will communicate more effectively with friends, colleagues and teachers. This in turn builds even greater confidence and the individual is motivated to learn more.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Charades

Try this game of "charades" with your child. Think of a message you want to give your child. The message should include an action, such as "Let's go for a walk" or "Let's read a book."

Now, play "charades." Convey the message without talking. Use body movements, facial expressions, etc. If this doesn't work, try pointing at things or picking them up.

See if your child can show that he understands your message. How effective was your message? What could you have done to communicate more clearly? How does this relate to the life of a young child?

TOPIC 26

Important Factors

Definition

Important factors involved in language development include:

- Children need others to learn to talk.
- Language is learned through imitation and in conversation.
- The three main goals of language development are to communicate, to learn about and make sense of the world, and to express feelings and thoughts.
- The four main influencers of language development are:
  - the brain is "pre-wired" to learn language
  - thinking
  - social environment
  - physical environment
- The four main components of language are
  - phonology (awareness of the sounds and sound patterns of our language)
  - syntactics (grammar)
  - semantics (meaning)
  - pragmatics (usage: knowing what language to use with different people)

Examples

- Infants start to mimic what they hear as a first step to sounding out words.
- Young children develop vocabulary as they participate in different experiences.
- Parents naturally "teach" their children language as they interact.

Key messages

- Learning language is a natural process.
- Several key factors are involved in learning a language.
- We depend on others to learn a language.

About important factors in language development

Children need others to learn to talk: Children's language develops through involvement in their world. Language is such a natural part of our daily lives that it's easy for parents to play an active role in their children's language development. Adults are natural models for children's learning.

Language is learned through imitation and conversation: Much of language learning happens when children imitate their parents. Parents teach in two ways: by direct instruction and through modelling where the child imitates the parent. One of the most natural and effective ways of fostering language development in young children is by engaging them in conversation.

Children attempt to communicate with their parents from birth by using eye contact, body language, sounds and then words. Some conversation strategies are learned best when modelled over time by adults who are good at it. Turn taking, listening, participating, eye contact, body language, knowing the various kinds of conversation for different situations, and using different words are all conversation strategies.

Specific ways that adults can help to teach and model the "art" of conversation are included in Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development (Topic 33).

The three main goals of language development are to communicate, and to learn about and make sense of the world, and to express feelings and thoughts: From birth, children need to belong, feel loved and to express their feelings and ideas. They must be able to communicate their feelings, ideas and thoughts to learn effectively. They need language to do this. Young children are constantly exploring and learning about the world using all their senses. Language allows them to name their discoveries and to understand how one thing is related to another. At a very early age, children use language to help understand and share ideas.

Four main factors that influence language are:

1. **Our brains are "pre-wired" to learn language**
   Children are born with the capacity for language.

2. **Thinking**
   Thinking skills are necessary to learn words and their meanings, to use words, and to express thoughts and ideas.

3. **Social environment**
   Children need to socialize to develop language. They need to have other people to listen to, talk with, imitate, and explore and reinforce their attempts.

4. **Physical environment**
   Children's physical surroundings influence language development. Varied physical environments provide many opportunities

for children to see, hear, smell, touch and taste – in other words, to experience the world.

Four main components of language

1. Phonology

Phonology is an awareness of the sounds of language. Very early on, children pay attention to the sound patterns in speech. They hear rhythm in language as they listen to people talk to them, read to them, tell stories, sing songs, and recite poems, riddles and jingles. They notice that some words have certain sound patterns or begin with the same sound and enjoy hearing phrases like "Wee Willy Winkie."

Most children become aware of sounds in a natural way through conversation, rhymes, word play and riddles. Awareness of the sound patterns of our language and of speech sounds is an important bridge between speaking and reading.

Adults can help children develop the skills necessary for reading success by playing with sounds and words, for example, making rhymes. Research tells us that children who have a well-developed awareness and recognition of sound patterns are well on the way to becoming good readers and spellers (Griffin and Olson, 1992). It is important for adults to be aware of this and the role phonology plays in later reading development.

You can help your children by:

- reading to them often and paying attention to the sounds of speech as you read
- choosing books that have rhymes and speech-sound play, and stressing the words that rhyme when you read
- playing word or rhyming games, using riddles and tongue twisters, and singing songs
- bringing different sounds to your child's attention by repeating rhymes, stressing sounds, and having fun with the many sound patterns of language

2. Semantics

Semantics refers to the meaning of words. Children learn the meaning of words in the context of their experiences, by using all their senses. They learn about worms – long worms, short worms and fat worms – as they play with them. It's important to provide children with as many opportunities as possible to explore the world and to use all their senses.

3. Syntactics

Syntactics refers to rules that apply to the structure of a language – how it is put together. Children learn about the correct use of grammar rules, or syntax, by listening to appropriate conversation. It is important for adults to model grammatically correct language in a natural way.

4. Pragmatics

Pragmatics refers to appropriate language to use in specific situations. For example, when children learn the correct rules of conversation, they learn how to speak formally (with some adults) and informally (with friends).

How do important factors in language development affect children's lifelong learning?

Adults who help children learn to listen and learn language are helping them to become efficient readers, writers and spellers.

People naturally attempt to communicate with others. As babies listen, they try to use eye contact, gestures, noise, sounds and finally words to get their message across to others. The development of speech and language is a natural outgrowth of listening to and imitating the speech and language of others. The development of reading and writing is an extension of this need to communicate and learn about our world.

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TOPIC 27

How Language Develops

Definition

Language development is the process of learning to listen, use body language, speak, read and write.

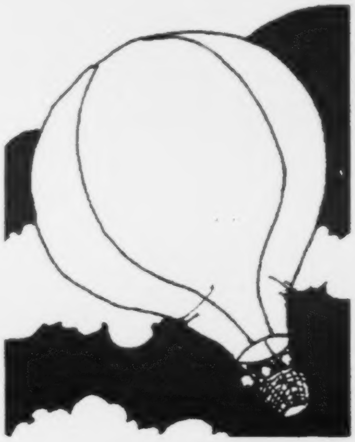
Examples

- Babies notice and listen to the sounds of their world – parents' voices, noises around the home, and music. (*listen*)
- From the time they are born, children watch people. The ability to "read" people is an essential life skill. Infants don't have the verbal language to communicate what they want. They rely on gestures and expressions to get their point across. (*body language*)
- From their first cry, children want to express themselves. They have a natural desire to communicate needs and feelings. (*speak*)
- As children learn to develop their listening and speaking skills, they are also beginning to communicate with others through reading and writing. *(read and write)*

Listening, using body language, speaking, reading and writing do not happen sequentially. They all overlap.

Key messages

- Language develops from birth.
- There is "language" even before real words.
- Learning to talk usually follows a pattern.
- Grammar (the way we put our words together) develops in stages.
- Vocabulary and word meaning can be developed.



About how language develops

The following is based on information from *The Developing Child* (Bee, 1992).

1. There is "language" before real words
In the first 2 to 4 months, infants can pay attention to and tell the difference between many sound patterns. This means that they can hear the difference between "m" as in mommy and "d" as in daddy. They also pay attention to and can tell differences in intonations. This means they hear the difference between a happy voice and a cross voice.

In the first 2 months, infants make pleasurable cooing sounds as their first words. At 6 to 7 months, they produce both vowel and consonant sounds, like "baba" and "dada." Infants soon begin to become aware of the rhythm of language. They make patterns of sound by imitating the sounds and rhythms of conversation, learning the "tune" of language before the words.

At 8 to 9 months, infants use gestures to demand things, moving their arms, throwing things, pointing, kicking their feet and making faces. They learn the rhythm of language through hand clapping, bouncing on your knee and singing songs, being held in your arms, and rocking while you sing.

Between 9 and 11 months, infants can hear and recognize individual words and understand their meaning. However, they are probably not able to speak many of the words they understand. The average receptive vocabulary of a 13-month-old is about 50 words.

2. Learning to talk
Between 7 and 13 months, meaningful words gradually replace "babbling." Remember, they still can't speak all the words they understand.

Ninety-five percent of all toddlers have spoken their first word by the time they are 15 months old. During this period, they grasp that language is symbolic – words are names for things. This means that parents no longer have to point to a dog and say "See the doggie." Toddlers themselves will point and say "doggie."

Most children focus on learning nouns first and a few verbs. Out of 50 words, only five or six will be verbs. The rest will be nouns, sprinkled with one or two pronouns. Some children start with words that focus on social relationships. They include words like I, you, me, no, yes and want.

The growth of their vocabulary is slow until children learn about 30 words. After the first 30 words are learned, they learn between 10 and 30 words a week. By the time children are 6 years old, they know between 10,000 and 14,000 words. Who do you think taught them most of the words? You – their most important teacher!

3. Early grammatical development
Grammar is the pattern of language. It is about where we put words when we speak and write, and what the correct words are. Grammar develops in two stages:

Stage 1 – Children develop patterns early on to make sense of language. Between 18 and 24 months on average, children put word and gestures or two words together to make their first sentence. When children begin to make sentences, they may not use plurals or verb tenses. So children may say, "See bird" or "Me jump."

In the early stages of making sentences, a single sentence can mean many different things. "Me go" can mean the child wants to go to the toilet, to bed or to play.

Stage 2 – Use of plurals, tenses and articles begins. Children begin to put "s" on words to make plurals, so that "dog" becomes "dogs." They use "ed" with verbs for past tenses, so that "jump" becomes "jumped." Children sometimes generalize this new knowledge at first and use "ed" in inappropriate ways, for example, "getted," "goed" and "sitted." This is a sign that they are exploring and discovering language.

During this stage, children begin to use "the" and "a" in sentences. Who, what, where, when, why and how questions also begin. This is a sign that children are practising the patterns of language. They have questions about everything!

Children are learning up to 10 words a day and have to ask questions so they can remember them.

The use of negatives begins. Children figure out the pattern for saying what they don't want. The word "no," which has been a word or gesture, is replaced by a negative sentence. When toddlers don't want to give someone a toy, they might say, "Can't have it!" instead of just "No!" Sometimes, they may not get the order of the words right, such as "Can't it have!"

4. Later grammatical development

Children make giant strides in grammatical development from birth to 5 years old. Adults do not necessarily teach language directly. Instead, they lead children to language through thousands and thousands of language experiences. When children begin to learn to read, they use the language patterns they have learned. If these patterns have not been internalized, reading is difficult because children cannot tell if something "sounds right" when they read it without these important clues.

5. Development of word meaning

What comes first – learning the word, or understanding its meaning? Actually, they often both happen at the same time. What is important for understanding word meaning is for the child to "experience" the word. For example, touching water, seeing a car, eating a popsicle.

6. Categorization

Once children can see that things have something in common, they can begin to categorize. Rather than learning thousands of isolated words, they make connections between those that have something in common. For example, shoe, sneaker, boot and sock are grouped into the category of "things people put on their feet." Once children understand this concept, a vocabulary explosion begins.

7. Learning pragmatics

Learning about pragmatics – what language to use in specific situations – and the rules of conversation begins at birth. Children know the essentials of language by the time they are 18 months old. By this time, children know that the goal of language is to communicate and they can adapt their language to different situations and different people. Children as young as 2 years old may say "Mine!" to another toddler, but may say "More apple?" to an adult.

How information about how language develops affects lifelong learning?

Because language is one of the major means by which ideas are shared and information gained, it is basic to living and learning. The degree to which a person is able to understand and use language has a direct impact on that person's ability to think, solve problems, communicate, read and write. In other words, we need language to learn effectively.

It is important that parents have a knowledge of the components of language and what is involved in language development. An awareness of the stages of language development allows you to effectively monitor your child's early speech and language. This awareness will help determine if there is a need to provide extra help or to request the assistance of a speech-language pathologist.

Children are "pre-wired" to learn language. During the very early years, speech and language patterns are quickly becoming established. The "language brain" is ready and eager to learn new sounds, sound patterns and words. These early language patterns are the building blocks that provide the foundation for future language development. Thus, it is important that these patterns are appropriate ones to allow for later language learning and learning in general.

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TOPIC 28

Parents' Role in Language Development

Definition

Parents' role in language development is to model appropriate communication strategies on how to speak and listen.

Example

The following are examples of when you can effectively model appropriate language:

- Daily routines. For example, eating routines, story-reading routines, bedtime routines, games and shopping routines.
- Things that interest your child. For example, if she is exploring flowers, talk about flowers, touch and smell them together, examine and label the parts.
- First experiences. For example, when he is looking at something for the first time, explore the item together, look for different uses and talk about it. Use new vocabulary that is associated with the object.
- Misusing words. When children are experimenting with language, they try many ways to use and say words. It's a good time to try different ways of using and saying words, showing the child how to use a word, even playing games with words.

Key messages

- Parents and other adults are essential for children's language development.
- Language development happens over time.
- Children experience language through imitation, interpretation and expansion.
- Children need to first hear words, phrases and sentences being used correctly and appropriately before they are able to use them correctly themselves.

About parents' role in language development

Although they do not teach language directly, parents are models for language development. Children need to hear and speak a language over time to learn it. Unless children have heard sounds and words, understand how they are used and then practise saying them, they can't learn the language. By the time children are 24 months old, they have learned most of the basics of a language, usually from their parents.

Imitation – Children learn by imitation. They imitate sounds (words), people (role playing) and things (playing dinosaur). A child says, "baw" and the parent takes the ball and says "ball." The child says, "baw" and the parent again says "ball." Sometimes, a child has to imitate a word many times before he can learn it.

Interpretation – Young children are trying to figure out language every day. The hundreds of questions children ask are a way of saying, "Help me figure out what's going on." You can help by interpreting or explaining things.

Expansion – As children's vocabulary expands, so does their understanding of the different ways they think about and use the same word. Parents can help expand the understanding of words. To children, the word "cat" might be all furry things, their pet cat only, or all black creatures. Parents can expand on the word "cat" by talking about cats and having the child experience them in different real-life situations or in books.

How does parents' role in language development affect children's lifelong learning?

Children are born with a desire to learn language. They start working on it right away by observing their world. Children who can safely and happily investigate the world inside their home develop a natural curiosity about the outside world of friends, school and community.

When natural curiosity is encouraged, a sense of trust and risk taking develops that tends to promote investigation and learning.

Parents can play an active role in fostering such investigation by providing opportunities to explore, such as walks, excursions and other family activities. Such activities stimulate thinking and develop vocabulary when you talk about what's going on at the same time. These activities also allow children to question and understand the world.

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ACTIVITIES to do with children

Breakfast time

Your child is sitting in his chair in the kitchen. It's 7:00 a.m. You have to get ready for work. He has eaten, but you haven't. Out comes the cereal, milk, sugar, spoon, jam, bread, bowl, butter and knife.

Provide the learning opportunity by giving your child a plastic bowl, a spoon and maybe the cereal box to play with while you make your breakfast. As you do so, talk about what you are doing and what he is doing.

Allow your child to lead the learning. Start eating and observe as your child points to the different things you're eating. You pick each item up and say what it is. If it's appropriate, you let your child experience the food or item that he wants to explore. Watch to see what he's doing and comment on what's happening.

Teach your child directly by modelling. Say, "Here is my bowl." (Pick it up.) As you pour the cereal, say "I am going to have some cereal. Dad is going to put the cereal in the bowl." As you show him the jar of jam, you could say, "Daddy is putting jam on his toast." Remember, the more senses we use, the more we remember. Keep this informal conversation going while you eat.

Language Learning

- hearing words attached to things
- exploring things attached to words
- attaching meaning to eating
- using body language (gestures)
- repeating words and sounds
- hearing words in the context of a story (the story of eating breakfast with Dad)

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe = watching Dad
Categorize = things used at breakfast
Label = cereal, toast

Pasta art!

You are preparing pasta for lunch.

Provide – Give your child a handful of uncooked pasta.

Allow – Encourage her to make pictures and faces on the table.

Teach – Invite her to talk about the pictures and faces she has made. Encourage her by asking questions. Talk about the pasta shapes. For example, "Round pasta makes good eyes!"

Language Learning

- using pictures to visualize a story
- associating objects with their name
- telling and hearing stories
- attaching meaning to shapes
- adult feedback on story creation

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Sequence = first this happened, then this
Decisions = making the picture
Opinion = this is the best pasta picture ever!

The sound of music

Your child is on the kitchen floor while you are getting dinner ready.

Provide – You take out a few plastic bowls and a few spoons and put them on the floor. You casually name each one as you hand it to your child.

Allow – First the bowls go on her head, then they go inside one another. The bowls are tasted and sat on. Then she picks up the spoons.

Teach – You sit down on the kitchen floor and pick up a spoon. You hit a bowl. She hits a bowl. You play "Baa Baa Black Sheep," tapping out the rhythm, words and sounds with the bowl and spoon. Have fun together for a few minutes and let your child continue "making music" when you continue to get dinner ready.

Language Learning

- naming objects
- using instruments to make sounds
- hearing words repeated in a rhythm
- hearing the rhythm of language
- multisensory language learning

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Pattern = rhythm
Cause/Effect = If I hit the bowl, it makes a sound.
Predict = What will happen if I hit the bowl?

TOPIC 29

Connecting with Children

Definition

Connecting with your children refers to the "affective" or feeling area of learning. This emotional connection plays a key role in language development and learning in general.

Examples

- Patting a child on the back shows that you are aware of him and that you enjoy his presence.
- Listening to a child's questions and responding to her answers shows her that you are interested in her ideas.
- Sharing your own childhood experiences with your child shows him that you understand what it's like to be a child.

Key messages

- Connecting shows that you value your child as a person, you are interested in what he feels and thinks, and that his opinions and ideas are important.
- The degree to which a parent connects with a child emotionally has a direct relationship on the child's feelings of self-worth, self-confidence and self-esteem.

About connecting with children

The key role of parents is in the "affective" or feeling area of learning. It's about the attitudes and values we have about each person, place and thing we come into contact with.

Parents explain the world to their children. How children feel about and connect to things is partly determined by what a parent teaches about any person, place, thing or idea. The connections that parents help children make in the early years often chart their course for life.

What connections would your children make?

sharing reading	=	eagerness (or apprehension?)
jumping into a pool	=	confidence (or fear?)
eating vegetables	=	yummy (or yucky?)
helping with the chores	=	belonging (or resentment?)

Language is a fundamental way in which children connect with others. As a general rule, the greater the parent and child connection, the greater the opportunities for language development.

How does connecting with children affect their lifelong learning?

The emotional connections between parent and child teach the child to trust, take risks, solve problems, have confidence, relate to others, feel secure to ask questions and explore the world. Children who do not have positive connections to a significant adult may be in danger of not developing these lifelong skills which are essential for learning and forming relationships (Rasminsky, 1999).

ACTIVITIES to do with children

Mimi's day

Dinner's over! Everyone is watching TV. Mimi toddles up and climbs onto her mother's knee. Mother looks at Mimi and says, "Let's go into the kitchen and have a talk about your day."

Provide – Mom is providing Mimi with an opportunity to get to know her as someone who appreciates her and knows that she has something important to say. Mimi hears adult language spoken directly to her, one-on-one.

Allow – By asking about Mimi's day, Mom is able to listen to Mimi's language and extend it by asking questions and making comments.

Teach – Mom is passing on certain attitudes and values by leaving the TV and talking to Mimi. She is modelling behaviour that teaches important concepts.

Examples of the process of thinking and language development connection:

Asking questions = Ask about each other's day.

Sequence = What happened first, second, next in Mimi's day?

Compare and Contrast = How were Mimi and Mom's days alike and different?

Frustration happens

You have had a really hard day. You arrive home and your 3-year-old and 5-year-old run to meet you. They are pointing at each other and shouting "He did it! He did it!" Your partner gives you that "You don't want to see this" look. You go to the kitchen and on the floor are the remains of one of your best plates. You start raising your voice at the children and your partner. Then you realize that you sound like the children. You stop, count to 10, say you're sorry, and ask what happened.

Provide – Home is a natural learning environment. Children watch us very closely. You are giving instructions for life to your children every day. They look to adults to help them figure out how to behave in various real-life situations.

Allow – Children have to learn how to behave in all kinds of stressful situations. They should not be sheltered from daily family situations because that's how they learn about life. They need to experience real life through the family before they enter the outside world.

Teach – Learning does not have to be all smiles and hugs. Life is full of surprises and frustrations. It is normal to lose your cool once in a while. What you do about it lets your child know you. If you manage it well, then you have taught him that you get angry, but you can handle it. The learning is even more effective if you take a few minutes to talk about what happened and why.

The child learns about the parent

Dad's behaviour = What did he do before Mom got home?

Mom's behaviour = While she was shouting? After she stopped shouting?

What happened? = Children are seeing that Mom wants to know the facts, not to blame.

Examples of the process of thinking and language connection

Predict = What is Mom's reaction going to be?

Cause/Effect = What is the effect of breaking the dish?

Fact and Opinion = What really happened?

Point of view = "He did it!" and "You don't want to see this."

Question = What really happened?

1 Share Learning Experiences

Invite participants to share some things that have happened with their children over the past week. How were these things learning experiences?

As participants share, make connections between these experiences and the topics you have discussed. By framing these experiences within a learning context, participants will see that they don't have to be teachers in a school set up at home. They just need to be aware of – and take advantage of – all natural opportunities for learning. Point out that participants are giving their children enriched learning every day.

Explore the enriched learning that is taking place every day:

- What did your child seem to be learning on his own?
- What do you think your child is learning from you?
- What are you learning from your child?
- How are you using PAT in your everyday activities?

2 Discuss Life Management Topic

Turn to the life management section at the back of the Participant Resource (page 147) and choose one topic. Lead an informal discussion.

Space is provided below for you to prepare several questions to get participants talking and to help you keep the discussion on track.

Life Management Topic ____________________

Questions ____________________________

____

____

3 Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

Explain that doing the hands-on learning activities will bring the topics to life.

This week's topics and learning activities are:

CYCLE #1
Topic 30: Early Listening and Speaking
Learning Activity – *Let's Tell a Story*

CYCLE #2
Topic 31: Early Reading
Learning Activity – *Is This Reading?*

CYCLE #3
Topic 32: Early Writing
Learning Activity – *You've Got Mail!*

CYCLE #4
Topic 33: Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development
Learning Activity – *Let's Talk*

Optional Learning Activity: Topics 25 to 33, *Home Learning Calendar*

4 Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

In this step, you will take the participants through the Experiencing Learning Cycle four times. To help you do this, the three stages are graphically identified both here and on the Experiencing Learning Cycle poster.

BRIEFING
LEARNING ACTIVITY
DEBRIEFING

1

BRIEFING

TOPIC 30

Early Listening and Speaking

(page 93, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some examples of early listening and speaking in your children?

Examples: When were the first times your children expressed interest in listening and speaking – for example, showing delight or surprise in being able to produce certain sounds?

Key Messages: Explain that the key messages will be further explored later in the workshop.

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Let's Tell a Story

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topic while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to realize that adults can foster early listening and early speaking

Materials

- a child's "wordless" picture book
- board or flipchart

Activity

Divide participants into pairs. One participant acts as a "parent" and the other as a "child." Each "parent" takes a turn "reading" a picture to their "child." The "child" mimics and makes up possible comments and questions that a child might make. This is a group activity – each pair follows the story line developed by the previous pair.

The role of the workshop leader is to facilitate the activity, encouraging parent questioning and childlike responses.

Ask participants why such an activity would be helpful to children's early listening and speaking. Possible responses include attitude (enjoyment of story telling), vocabulary building, labelling, self-esteem, sharing, imagining, expressing feelings. List responses on a board or flipchart.

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DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

2

BRIEFING

TOPIC 31

Early Reading

(page 96, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Explain that there are certain things that children need to learn if they are to become successful readers.

Examples: What other things can you do to help children learn to read later on?

Key Messages: Explain that current research on the process of reading is providing valuable information about how parents influence children's reading development.

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

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LEARNING ACTIVITY

Is This Reading?

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topic while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to recognize that there are many skills for children to learn before they can learn to read
- to understand that adults can foster early reading

Materials

- list the pre-reading skills for beginning to learn to read (below) on a board or flipchart.

Activity

Some of the skills that children need to learn if they are to become successful readers follow. Have a brief discussion about how some of these items relate to early reading:

- good oral vocabulary
- familiarity with language patterns
- familiarity with sounds and sound patterns
- hearing rhymes in words
- a sense of story – understanding that a story has a beginning, a middle and an end
- knowing how to predict what will happen next
- ability to associate what they hear with prior knowledge
- ability to gain information from and tell stories about pictures
- ability to use their imagination

After reading this list, compare it with the list participants developed in the previous activity. Point out that the list they developed is probably more extensive than this one. This will help participants recognize that they already know about most prerequisite reading skills and how to foster them.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

3

BRIEFING

TOPIC 32

Early Writing

(page 99, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Would you like to demonstrate (on a board or flipchart) examples of a child's early writing efforts?

Examples: What other examples can you share from your own experience?

Key Messages: In what ways are listening, speaking, reading and writing related?

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

You've Got Mail!

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants explore materials, then discuss the topic.

Purpose

- to recognize the importance of young children's early attempts to draw and write

Materials

- paper
- envelopes
- crayons

Activity

Hand out the materials. Ask participants to think of a special person or character in a young child's life. "Write" a message to that person or character. As they write, they should keep in mind that they are only about 3 to 5 years old. (Remind them not to write to Santa because the message is too predictable.)

Participants then put the letters in an envelope, address it and give it to someone in the group. Make sure that everyone has a letter. Have participants pretend they are a very young child as they interpret the letter they received to the group.

Have participants discuss the interrelated and connected processes of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

4

BRIEFING

TOPIC 33

Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development

(page 103, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What is one thing you did within the past week that fits this definition?

Examples: What do you usually think of when you hear the word "conversation?" (Sometimes, we think conversation is important only if it takes place in a formal situation or when it is between adults.)

Key Messages: What do you think about being your child's language coach?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Let's Talk

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topic while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to review some strategies to foster children's conversational skills

Materials

- Participant Resource, Topic 33, "About conversational strategies to foster language development," page 103

Activity
Have participants work in pairs. Each pair selects a "pointer" from "About conversational strategies to foster language development." Allow them a few minutes to read their selection and discuss their strategy for explaining it to the group. Encourage them to be creative in presenting their pointer. For example, they may role play or do charades, depending on their comfort level.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

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LEARNING ACTIVITY (OPTIONAL)

Home Learning Calendar

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topics while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to have planned activities to enhance children's language development
- to monitor opportunities to enhance children's language development in their daily activities
- to experience the PAT model

Materials *(for the workshop leader)*

- a large outline of the calendar for the present month (or the next month). Make one by using a large piece of bristleboard or chart paper and drawing in the appropriate number of squares to represent the month.
- 30 coloured circles slightly smaller than the squares on the calendar. Use five different colours to represent the categories of listening, speaking, reading, writing and body language. Make six of each colour (for example, six yellow, six blue) so that you have 30 circles, enough for each day of the month. Participants will be suggesting an activity for each one of these. You will use your materials to model the Home Learning Calendar.

Materials *(for participants)*

- a smaller version of the same calendar above for each participant
- small coloured circles that are slightly smaller than the squares on the participants' calendar.

You will need enough so that each participant receives 30 circles. Use five different colours and provide six circles of each colour. For example, six yellow, six blue, etc.

Activity

You may decide to share this activity as an idea, or do the activity if time allows.

Provide a small calendar and 30 circles for each participant. Each colour stands for listening, speaking, reading, writing or body language. For example, listening is yellow, speaking is blue, etc. Participants write an idea for activities in each one of these. When they are finished, they will have six activities for listening, six for speaking, etc.

Model the Home Learning Calendar on your large calendar using your larger coloured circles. As participants give suggestions, stick a coloured circle in random fashion on one of the calendar squares. Continue until you have a circle on each day of the month. When you finish, the calendar should have a variety of coloured circles scattered throughout the month.

Since this is only a demonstration, it is not necessary to write a suggestion on each circle. Participants will be writing suggestions on their own calendars.

Allow participants to stick the circles randomly on their calendar. When they are finished, they will each have a Home Learning Calendar with about 30 activities that they can try. They may choose to do this activity by themselves, with a partner, or in a small group.

Teach. Ask participants to think about a month in the life of a family with young children. Ask for suggestions of activities that families can do to enhance children's language development. For example, what can they do to enhance a young child's ability to speak? to listen? to write?

Point out that their suggestions do not have to be formal "teaching" activities. The simpler the idea, the more likely that it will be "do-able."

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

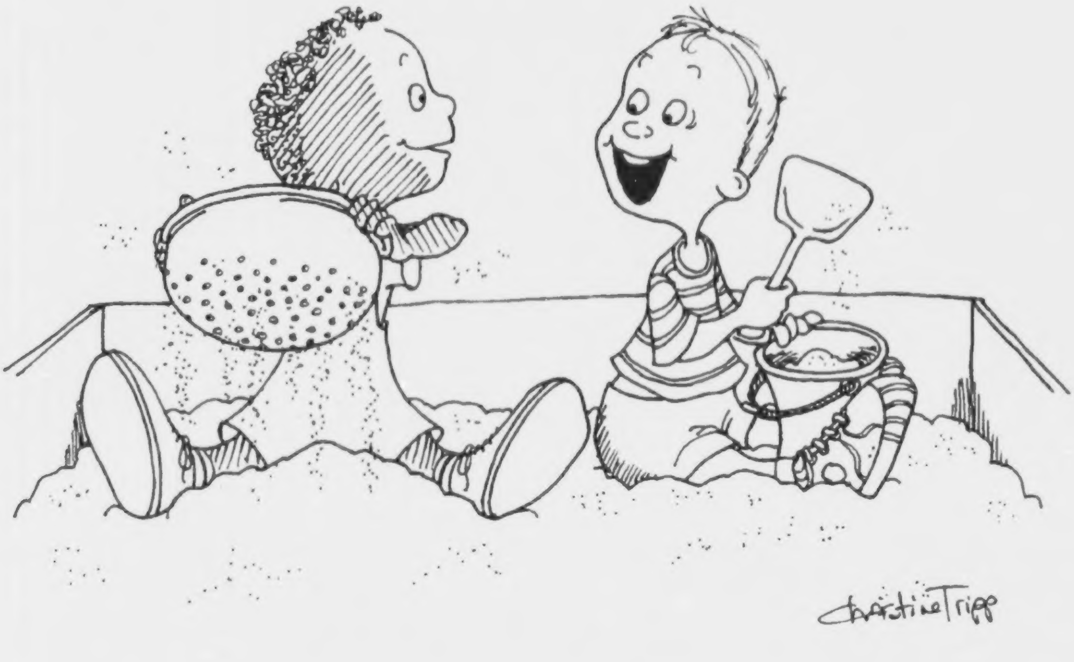
5 Make the Most of the Participant Resource

During most of the workshop, participants learn by doing the activities rather than by reading the information in the Participant Resource. Based on your own preference and that of the group, choose a topic from this workshop to further explore in the Participant Resource. Turn to the section and lead an informal discussion. Repeat for other topics if you have the time.

Encourage parents to use the Participant Resource at home to:
- review the topics
- get more information
- get ideas for learning activities with children
- share their new knowledge with friends

MODULE SIX

More About Language Development


Christine Tripp

Introduction

Language development begins very early. Communication begins with the first cuddle and coo. Reading and writing and all later literacy is based on those early interactions between child and caregiver. This module elaborates on how this process takes place and provides strategies you can use to further enhance your child's language development.

More About Language Development Topics

Topic 30:	Early Listening and Speaking
Topic 31:	Early Reading
Topic 32:	Early Writing
Topic 33:	Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development

TOPIC 30

Early Listening and Speaking

Definition

Early listening is the ability of children at a young age to hear different sounds and sound patterns, distinguish different sounds correctly, and understand and interpret what they hear.

Examples

- Babies recognize their mother's voice.
- Toddlers begin to use words and phrases to ask for what they want.

Key messages

- The brain is "pre-wired" to learn language and to communicate.
- The role of parents is to provide stimulation and appropriate opportunities for language development.

About early listening and speaking

Many people cannot read or write but are still excellent communicators. A few centuries ago, most people could not read or write but were effective speakers. Speaking and listening are common language tools for all of us. Parents instinctively know how to provide a natural environment where speaking and listening develop. Rather than formally teaching, parents provide an environment that allows learning to happen.

Very early on, children want to tell others what they are experiencing. They depend on parents to provide the language. Parents provide language not only through words, but through body language, gestures, facial expressions, sounds and reactions. Think of the smiles and hugs that reward that first attempt at making sounds. Even though babies may not at first connect the sounds they made with a real object or person, continued reinforcement helps make connections. Then, sounds like "dada" become a real word with real meaning.

In the first 30 months, children understand most sounds and have figured out the fundamentals of listening. The hours of modelling speaking and listening, providing experiences and allowing children to learn naturally pay off. Then, children begin to develop and use language at an incredible rate. By providing a rich language-learning environment, adults can provide the key that unlocks the doors to children's speaking and listening.

How does early listening and speaking affect children's lifelong learning?

The ability to communicate affects every aspect of a person's life. As the TALK model shows, language is essential for any learning or problem solving.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

A walk in the woods

It is a sunny fall day and between loads of washing you decide to take Jessie, age 3, and Rhonda, age 18 months, for a walk in the nearby park.

Provide – The outdoors is a child's learning laboratory. Rhonda hears a dog bark and is excited. She makes a sound each time the dog barks. You repeatedly say, "Yes, that is a dog. The dog is barking. It sounds like a 'woof, woof.'" Of course, a dog doesn't really say "woof, woof," but that's close enough and you're modelling vowel and consonant sounds and providing a context for your child to say a word.

Jessie walks in the dried leaves and hears the sounds they make. You listen closely to the sound and decide to listen for other sounds of birds, the wind, nearby traffic, the trees creaking. You are teaching Jessie the beginnings of active listening – that is, being aware of sounds and sound patterns.

Allow - You watch as Jessie and Rhonda experience the park. You head in directions you know will provide stimulation, but you don't interfere.

Teach – You mimic animal sounds and watch as the children run to find where the sound came from. You answer questions, not just with a "yes" or a "no", but extend the language. As you explain about the bark of a tree and Jessie asks questions about it, Rhonda listens closely, touches the bark and also learns about her world.

The favourite story

It's bed time, and time for shared reading. Your child snuggles into bed and you start to read. "Stop," comes the command, "Not that one!" As you have done so many times before, you get the book which is the current favourite and prepare to read it for the 500th time! You begin, your child riveted on your every word. You are tired and decide to skip a page. "You missed some," he tells you at once. Your child is practising active listening.

Provide – Children love to hear a favourite story over and over. It is an opportunity for a different kind of speaking and listening because the child knows the book so well. You are providing an environment that lets your child use his prior knowledge to chime in with words, phrases and sentences that he has memorized. You can provide opportunities to use the book to make up a parallel story or a different ending, talk about the qualities of each character, draw pictures about the book, have the child read part of the book and introduce other books about the same topic or by the same author.

Allow – Shared reading is a time to allow the child to express his thoughts. Children will often want to talk about things that are off topic. See these as opportunities to let your child take the lead. His motivation to explore with you is a wonderful time for some powerful learning and teaching.

Teach – Remember the goal of shared reading at this age – enjoyment! When parents read with their children, they may want to focus on teaching reading. However, the way to increase reading potential at this age is through the development of speaking and listening strategies. Children learn the skills of reading through the prior knowledge they have about speaking and listening, as well as information about people, animals and things in the world around them.

TOPIC 31

Early Reading

Definition

Early reading is the first step in using language to read printed words.

Examples

- Children recognize your facial expressions and read your body language.
- The infant in the crib looks at mobiles that have a pattern.
- The young child hears stories about the family history.
- A parent reads to her child.
- The child asks questions and more questions and you answer them patiently.
- While visiting the grocery store, dad points to the labels and names them out loud.

Key messages

- You can help in the process of learning to read from the time children are born.
- Any interaction with your child is an opportunity to teach early reading skills.
- Lots of interaction with your children can help them learn to read.

About early reading

Reading begins at birth. Children read your body language, hear the sounds of your voice and begin to form impressions about the world – all skills they will use when they meet words in print.

To eventually read printed words, children need opportunities to hear and use sounds, sound patterns and oral language, have prior knowledge about different things and be able to think. All of these requirements are already beginning to develop during the first weeks of life.

The more children do, the more language they will acquire. You can help children learn to read by providing things for them to do and talk about, allowing them to lead their learning, and teaching by modelling or directly giving words or adding new ones.

Any activity gives children a chance to hear and use language, opportunities to think (sort, label, look for patterns, sequence, predict, compare and contrast, question, form opinions, understand cause and effect, make decisions) and learn about their world.

How does early reading affect children's lifelong learning?

Early reading activities, such as listening, speaking, exploring the world, thinking and developing positive attitudes toward reading, set the stage for all later, more formal experiences with print.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

Sharing a picture book

You and your 4-year-old are cuddled up on the couch together. He wants to share a book with you.

Provide – You have a selection of picture books that you have picked out together.

Allow – You allow your child to choose the book he wants to share with you. He passes you the book right side up and opens it to the first page. He wants to turn the pages as you read. He shows that he understands about books – that they tell a story, that you read them from front to back and from top to bottom, that the marks on the page have meaning, and that reading is fun. Listen to what he has to say and talk about the pictures.

Teach – Enrich his learning by reminding him of what he already knows about this topic, by making your own comments about the pictures, by asking him what might happen next, and by comparing the book to his own experiences.

Learning About Reading

- Your child learns new words and their meanings as you discuss the pictures.
- Books are read from front to back.
- Books tell a story.
- Pictures and words in books stand for things in the real world (symbols).
- Books can be fun.

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe = looking at the pictures

Sequence = telling what happened first, second, next

Label = naming things in the pictures

Predict = telling what might happen next

Question = asking and answering questions about the pictures

Prior knowledge = using what he already knows to help him learn something new

Setting the table

Little children love to help Mom or Dad.

Provide – Include children in your daily routine as much as possible. Everyday life can provide knowledge and experience that are essential to reading. Sharing experiences (gaining knowledge) and talking (learning language) in a situation where children are also encouraged to predict, express opinions and make choices (thinking) provide all the components they will need to make sense of printed words later on.

Allow – Let them help you as you make the bed, sweep the floor or set the table. You are not only allowing new learning to take place, you are helping them to feel valued and competent – you are boosting their self-esteem!

Teach – As you and your child work together, model how to set the table, provide names for things (knife, fork, soup spoon, dinner plate, napkin) and talk about what to do first, second, third... (first we set out the plates, second we set the forks, spoons and knives beside the plates, third...)

Learning About Reading

- hearing new words and learning their meaning
- hearing, seeing, feeling new experiences that become prior knowledge to be used in reading

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe = watching Mom or Dad model how to set the table

Label = learning the names of tools for eating

Sequence in order = setting things on the table

Categorize = things we eat with

Recognize patterns = place settings form a repeated pattern

Predict = if we set out soup bowls, we must be having soup

Here are some more PAT ideas to inspire children's early reading

- Your baby babbles, exploring the different sounds he can make with his voice. As you repeat and encourage the sounds that make sense in our language, he is developing his ability to listen for sounds.
- Talk about what is happening as you do things together – "Let's put on your blue shirt." "It's starting to rain. We're going to get wet!" Babies can understand more words than they can say.
- As children begin to talk, help them find the words for things they see and do. "Milk. You want some milk."
- Add words. "Kitty!" "Yes, soft kitty!" as you stroke the kitten's fur. Build on what they already know.
- Repeat words again and again so your children will be able to understand and remember them.
- Don't do all the talking. Ask questions and listen to your children's answers. You'll learn a lot about them and they'll feel loved and respected.
- Sing songs. The music makes the words easier to remember and gives children a feeling for the rhythm of language.
- Read to your children. A daily routine of sharing books establishes a love of reading in children even before they know what the words mean.
- Re-read with your children. Hearing the same story again gives them a chance to remember new words and understand the patterns of the story.

TOPIC 32

Early Writing

Definition

Early writing involves the various beginning stages of marks, scribbles and other written symbols used to represent ideas or things.

Examples

- A young child scribbles with a crayon and tells you it is a story.
- A young child recognizes pictures and wants to imitate them on paper.
- A child tells a story about his cat and asks you to write down what he says.

Key messages

- There is a direct link between writing and speaking, listening and reading.
- Learning to write begins at birth.
- Parents have an essential role in the early writing process.

About early writing

Writing begins with your children's first attempts to communicate. To be able to write words, they have to know about language and have prior knowledge. Before children write, they must understand that words stand for real things and that real things can also be represented by marks on a page.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are so totally intertwined that anything that affects one of these facets of language affects all the others. Giving children lots of opportunities to have experiences and talk about them enables them to develop the prior knowledge and the words and ideas they will use to write later on.

Although writing begins with speaking, true writing is making symbols on paper. When children draw a circle with the stick arms and legs and call it "Mommy," they are beginning to be real writers! These simple drawings show that they know how to use a symbol on paper to represent an idea. Later, they will develop an awareness that there is a difference between drawing and writing. They begin to make scribbles, mimicking writing as they become aware that adults make certain shapes when they write letters.

Soon, children want to tell you what the scribbles "say." They understand the important concept that writing is talk written down and can be read back again. Encourage your children to write even before they can read or spell correctly. Writing, reading and spelling develop side-by-side.

As children begin to hear individual sounds and sound patterns in words and become aware (around Kindergarten or Grade 1) that certain letters stand for certain sounds, they will begin to use these letters in their stories. Consonants are usually heard and used first, so the story might look like this:

> *I cn rd m bk* OR *I can rid mi bik*
> (I can ride my bike.)

This "invented" or temporary spelling is an important and essential step on the way to conventional, correct spelling. Children are working out the rules, just as they did when they were learning to talk. Be sure to encourage your children's creative efforts! Inventive spelling is a child's necessary first step to becoming an efficient speller.

At this stage, you can help children listen for the sounds, sound patterns and words by pronouncing these sounds and words slowly and correctly. At this early stage, it is important to accept their attempts at writing and spelling what they hear.

How does early writing affect children's lifelong learning?

Just as early experiences with listening, speaking, exploring the world and thinking build the foundation for later reading, so do these same experiences support the child's development of writing skills. Early play with crayons, markers, paints and pencils leads to real writing later.

From the day children enter school, there is an expectation for them to communicate in print. Successful writing experiences in school will lead to greater opportunities for successful learning and employment in the future. In today's world, the need for computer literacy is great. Reading and writing are the basic tools needed to use a computer.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

Exploring writing materials

Spread out a piece of plastic on the table and provide your child with a choice of paper and markers.

Provide – Have a variety of materials available to encourage your child to draw and write, like crayons, chalk, markers, sand or salt trays, paints, scrap paper and cardboard.

Allow – Let your child explore and choose the materials she wants to use for her creations.

Teach – You might want to expand the learning by helping her make a scrapbook of her drawings or stories. Recycled wrapping paper and left-over wallpaper make colourful covers for your child's own books of stories and pictures.

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe = looking at and exploring the materials

Label = learning the names of the different materials

Predict = thinking about what each material will look like on the page

Prior knowledge = using what she already knows about the materials to learn new information

Going grocery shopping

Sometimes you need to get the shopping done quickly so you'll go alone. But sometimes you can leave enough time to make grocery shopping an outing with your child. This time can be a great learning experience for your child.

Provide – By taking your child shopping, you are providing a rich opportunity for language development. There are all those fruits and vegetables to observe and name, all the different kinds of packaging things come in, all the signs and labels to read, the people to talk to, things to lift and handle, etc.

Allow – Allow your child to look and question, to discover that the freezers are cold, to wait in line at the check out, to learn that you have to pay for groceries.

Teach – Answer his questions, look for patterns and categories, name all the new things he notices, explain why meat must be kept cold, show him the cash register receipt and ask him to help carry the bags to the car.

So where does writing come into this? Everywhere! Observing and labelling, noticing words on signs and words and numbers on the receipt, looking for patterns, talking, and questioning all give him the language and the prior knowledge that he will need to be a writer. This also helps to make your child more aware of letters and how they are grouped together to form words. If your child is interested, you can expand the writing component of this experience to include real writing.

Before you go shopping, have your child check the cupboards with you as you list the things you need to buy. Is there something he would like to add to the list? Print his items on your list (or let him print them himself in his own way). When you get home, ask if he'd like to make a story about your shopping trip. He can tell you the words as you write them down, or he can draw a picture and write his own words. Remember that spelling and letter formation are not important here. The purpose is for you to model and your child to experience that we can write down what we say, and that we or someone else can read it back. This "language experience" approach can be used for any experience your child has. It shows the connection between reading and writing. Why not keep a scrapbook of these stories?

Learning About Writing

- hearing new words and learning their meaning
- seeing and discussing printed words on signs and labels
- making connections between spoken words, written words, and reading
- seeing writing modelled
- hearing, seeing, feeling new experiences that become prior knowledge to be used in writing

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe = seeing, smelling, touching the various foods

Label = learning the names for things in the grocery store

Categorize = vegetables, fruits, canned goods, meats, dairy products

Recognize Patterns = cans on the shelves, rows of carts, tiles on the floor

Cause and Effect = if ice cream isn't kept frozen, it will melt

Here are some more PAT ideas to inspire children's early writing

- Listen as your child tells about her adventures. Offer to print what she tells you, and read it together.
- Stick labels on objects around the house, for example, stove, sink, table, chair. (Use lower case letters and let your child help you print the words.) These labels can be used for learning games such as finding all the words that begin or end with a certain sound, or that belong in particular categories, for example, white things, things with legs.
- Write notes to your child. Leave them on the fridge, or in his shoe or mitten, or send one when he goes to visit a friend. Encourage him to write notes to you, to Grandma, to his friends.
- Model reading and writing as part of your daily life. Your child will want to do what you do.

TOPIC 33

Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development

Definition

Conversation is the informal exchange of ideas by spoken words.

Examples

- Children talk together as they play in the sand box.
- A parent and child talk as they go for a walk
- Two people talk together as they wait for their bus.

Key messages

- Language needs a social context in which to develop.
- Conversations help children to develop their language.
- Children need to learn the skills of conversation, such as turn taking, active listening and appropriate responses.
- There is an effective way to have a conversation with a young child.
- The natural way that parents talk to a child is called "parentese."
- Parents can be effective language teachers in helping their children learn the art of conversation.

About conversational strategies to foster language development

We are born with the innate capacity to develop language, but it does not happen automatically. Conversations provide a child with opportunities to learn language. The more conversations you have with your child, the more you are helping with learning. However, there is more to conversation than just talking.

The following pointers can help your children learn effective conversational skills:

Turn taking
Children have to be shown how and encouraged to take turns during conversation. Some will let others do all the talking and need to be encouraged to participate. Others will want to do all the talking and need to learn to listen to others. By observing your child and getting to know her, you will learn how much to intervene.

Over time, children learn to recognize the signals that indicate that it is someone else's turn to talk. Gestures and direct words such as "What do you think?" may be used. Sometimes, a pause or silence indicates that the other person is expected to respond.

Children need time to think of what they want to say and how to say it. If they are cut off, children are less likely to participate. Adults can model turn-taking signals to help children learn how to take turns in conversation.

Face-to-face interaction

When we are conversing with young children, it is important to be face to face with them. Make eye contact and watch for facial expressions. When we are face to face with children – down at their level or lifting them up to ours – we are showing genuine interest in what they are saying. Face-to-face interactions let children know that they have our attention and that we are enjoying sharing a conversation and ideas with them.

Parentese

"Parentese" is the type of talking adults, especially parents, use with very young children. There are several key features to parentese:

- shorter sentences
- simpler words
- higher pitched voice
- a slower rate of speech
- highly repetitive
- sentences grammatically correct but simpler
- the child's sentences are repeated in some form
- vocabulary is simpler, using words that the child will understand

Parentese tends to keep children's interest longer. They continue to engage in the conversation or activity and try to imitate what they are hearing. Parentese helps very young children pay attention to language and develop their own language. Studies have shown that children who are exposed to parentese tend to develop language more quickly (Manolson, 1992).

Sensitivity to a child's developmental level

It helps to have a general idea of what the average language development expectations are for children at each stage. It is best not to expect certain events or milestones to happen at specific times. Some children speak in sentences very early on and some take a few months to learn this skill.

Observe and listen carefully to children's language attempts and model your language in conversation with them to a level slightly ahead of theirs. For example, if a child is using two-word sentences, expand to three or four words when you speak. If he is saying simple sentences, respond with simple sentences containing one or two descriptive words. For example, if a child says "I see a doggie," you might reply "Look at the big, furry doggy."

Questioning

The kinds of questions an adult asks can encourage or discourage children's participation in a conversation. As much as possible, ask questions that will encourage the child to continue to talk about the topic, how they feel, what they think.

Conversation starters – Children respond to questions that invite conversation. For example, you might ask "What did you do at Grammie's?" "How did you do that?" "What do you think will happen next?" "What will we do now?" "What did you play with in the sandbox?"

These open-ended questions encourage children to exchange information and talk about their thoughts and ideas. Your children may need time to think about their answer and find the words to use.

Using a questioning tone is a good way to ask children to explain or repeat what they have said if you did not understand the first time. By repeating a child's words in a questioning tone, you are showing interest and encouraging the child to repeat words or say them in a different way.

Conversation stoppers – Questions that require only a yes or no or a one-word answer – for example, "Did you have good time?" "Are you going to play with your truck?" "Do you want cereal?" – discourage children from further conversation.

Questions that contain the answer – for example, "You want a drink of water, don't you?" – also discourage conversation.

Too many questions asked at once and too quickly – for example, "Did you like that story?" "What part did you like best?" "Do you want another story?"– can be overwhelming for a child.

Self-talk, parallel talk, expansion, labelling, modelling

Adults can become effective language teachers by practising the following strategies with young child:

Self-talk – Talk about what you are doing as you are doing it. For example, "I am peeling the carrots now. The carrots feel hard and cold. Now I will cut the carrots. Where is the pot? I am going to put the carrots in the pot."

Parallel talk – Talk about what your child is doing as he is doing it. For example, "You are playing with your car. Look, the car is going fast. The car is going up the road."

Expansion – Say what your child said but add a little to it. For example, your child might say "I wear coat" and you could reply, "Yes, you are wearing your red coat."

Labelling – Name things for your child. Use action words, prepositions and adjectives so that she has a variety of types of words to put together in sentences. For example, you might say "You're getting a toy out of the toybox. Now you are putting the book on the table. The book is a funny book. Let's open the book and read the funny story."

Modelling – Give your child a good language model in such a way that she is not afraid of being corrected. If she has positive feelings, she will more likely try to converse. For example, your child might say "Me wike toop" and you might say "You like soup."

Active listening

A child knows you're interested in him when you listen to what he is trying to say. When you listen intently to a child, you tell him he is important and worth attention and time. His natural reaction will be to attempt to use more words and talk to you more. The way you respond to a child's early attempts at language will greatly influence language development.

Interpreting your child's language attempts

It is natural for parents to try to understand what their child is saying. By interpreting out loud what we think the child has said, we are confirming that she is getting her message across. Often, we need to add our own words to hers as we interpret her meaning. This gives the child a language model to follow.

Sometimes, the interpretation is guesswork and you have to ask your child with a questioning tone or a gesture. What's important is that the child knows that someone is taking his words seriously enough to repeat them. If there are lots of smiles and hugs, interpreting becomes a shared language learning experience for parent and child.

Reinforcing your children's language attempts

Children need to know that you're noticing their first attempts to speak. You can reinforce these attempts in different ways:

- Sometimes, reinforcement is as simple as giving the child what she requested, for example, the child asks for "Wawa!" and you might say "You want water!" as you give her a glass of water.
- Continue to talk with your child about the topic she brought up. This shows her that her words and ideas are important to you. The give-and-take of conversation encourages her to keep trying to use the language she is hearing.
- Use physical reinforcements like smiles, a hug, a kiss or a touch.
- Use verbal reinforcements, such as "Good for you!" "Sounds good!" "I like the way you used that new word."

How do conversational strategies affect children's lifelong language learning?

All the strategies covered in this topic can effectively enhance children's lifelong language learning.

Conversation is the gateway to your child's language development. Talk to and with your child at every opportunity.

Conversation with adults involves listening, asking questions and responding to answers. This helps to develop a sense of security and encourages the child to continue exploring and using language. Participating in conversation with peers in informal play situations is equally important.

Such social interaction is one of the essential ingredients for intellectual development as the child listens to the viewpoints and ideas of others and compares them with her own understanding of the world (Labinowicz,1980).

Conversation is a valuable motivator for continued language development and learning. Conversation provides a natural context for language development to take place. Parents are in a key position to set up and encourage such language experiences.

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1 Share Learning Experiences

Invite participants to share some things that have happened with their children over the past week. How were these things learning experiences?

As participants share, make connections between these experiences and the topics you have discussed. By framing these experiences within a learning context, participants will see that they don't have to be teachers in a school set up at home. They just need to be aware of – and take advantage of – all natural opportunities for learning. Point out that participants are giving their children enriched learning every day.

Explore the enriched learning that is taking place every day:

- What did your child seem to be learning on his own?
- What do you think your child is learning from you?
- What are you learning from your child?
- How are you using PAT in your everyday activities?

2 Discuss Life Management Topic

Turn to the life management section at the back of the Participant Resource (page 147) and choose one topic. Lead an informal discussion.

Space is provided below for you to prepare several questions to get participants talking and to help you keep the discussion on track.

Life Management Topic ______________________

Questions ____________________________

____

____

3 Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

Explain that doing the hands-on learning activities will bring the topics to life.

This week's topics and learning activities are:

CYCLE #1
Topic 34: Health Resources
Learning Activity – *Health for Us #1*

CYCLE #2
Topic 35: Health Influencers
Learning Activity – *Health for Us #2*

CYCLE #3
Topic 36: Health Populations
Topic 37: Values
Topic 38: Health Strategies
Learning Activity – *Health for Us #3*

4 Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

In this step, you will take the participants through the Experiencing Learning Cycle three times. To help you do this, the three stages are graphically identified both here and on the Experiencing Learning Cycle poster.

BRIEFING | LEARNING ACTIVITY | DEBRIEFING

1

BRIEFING

TOPIC 34

Health Resources

(page 109, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What different kinds of health resources relate to your children?

Examples: Talk about mental and spiritual health for a minute. Many people confuse mental health with mental illness. Some people also often think spiritual health is limited to a relationship with a higher power. However, from the health perspective in this module, spiritual health will refer to the topics listed in the examples.

Key Messages: Why is physical health usually the health resource that gets the most attention? For most people, physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health are also essential for dealing with everyday life.

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Health for Us #1

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants do the activity, then discuss the topic.

Purpose

- to view health resources from the perspectives of treatment and prevention of illness, and promotion of health
- to emphasize prevention of illness and promotion of health

Materials

- Participant Resource, Topic 34, "Examples," page 109
- Participant Resource, Topic 34, "Activity for parents," page 111
- Participant Resource, Topic 34, "About health resources," page 110

Activity

Ask participants to read "Examples" of the kinds of health resources we have to prevent illness and promote health.

Have participants do the "Activity for parents." When they have finished, ask them the meaning of the statement, "Health is not merely the absence of illness." You may wish to discuss this statement in relation to the information in "About health resources."

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DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

2

BRIEFING

TOPIC 35

Health Influencers

(page 112, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Write down six things that influence your physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health. You may use the notes section of the module.

Examples: How do each of these examples relate to the health of your children?

Key Messages: What is a positive health influencer in your family that enhances the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual or social health of your children?

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

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LEARNING ACTIVITY

Health for Us #2

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants do the activity, then discuss the topic.

Purpose

- to be aware of the major influencers of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health as they relate to children

Materials

- Participant Resource, Topic 35, "Activity for parents," page 114

Activity

Have participants do the "Activity for parents." When they have finished, discuss why each health influencer affects health. Focus the discussion on how these influencers affect the different health resources.

This topic has the potential to be sensitive. As workshop leader, you know the group and may choose the most appropriate approach to the discussion. Avoid going down a "deficit path" and "blame" talk. The purpose of the discussion is to make participants aware of health influencers, and not engage in solutions to health issues surrounding the influencers.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:

- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:

- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

3

BRIEFING

TOPIC 36

Health Populations

(page 115, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: How is each of the listed populations responsible for the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health of your children? For example, the individual child has responsibility for learning how to get along with others (social health) and staying away from danger (physical health); the family has responsibility for providing a safe and loving environment (physical and emotional health); the community has responsibility for providing opportunities for caring and sharing with others (social and spiritual health).

Examples: Do you know someone who matches each of the examples?

Key Messages: Have parents select one of their children and make a list of words that describe their child physically, emotionally, mentally, spiritually and socially in the notes section of the module.

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 37

Values

(page 117, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some examples from your own family experience?

Examples: What are some examples from your community, a province/territory or the world that relate to the topic of values.

Key Messages: What are some of the value messages, both positive and negative, that TV presents to children?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 38

Health Strategies

(page 120, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What is one strategy you use regularly to model ways to increase your children's physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health?

Examples: How do your family members help each other to increase their different kinds of health?

Key Messages: What health issues make health a concern for every citizen?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Health for Us #3

Teaching Approach: Do and Talk
Lead the group in an interactive discussion about the topics while participants do the activity.

Purpose

- to create health stories and relate them to health populations, values and health strategies

Materials

- board or flipchart
- Participant Resource, Topic 38, "About health strategies," page 120
- Participant Resource, Topic 37, "About values," page 117

Activity

Write the words: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? on a board or flipchart. Leave space between and under each word to write phrases.

- Under Who, ask participants to list at least six people from different populations. For example, "Joe, a senior..."
- Under What, ask them to give you six possible situations in which people find themselves. For example, in a job they love/hate, going on a vacation...
- Under When, ask them to list six times based on a variety of possibilities. For example, season of the year, time of day, while walking the dog, playing cards...
- Under Where, ask them to list six locations.
- Under Why, list six reasons for doing things. For example, to make me happy, to stop a leak, to avoid a problem...
- Under How, list six ways of doing things. For example, with a smile...

Ask individual participants to select one example from each list to create a story line. Here is an example: Anne, a 40-year-old nurse, works in a dog pound at night, because she likes to climb mountains, with a smile.

The story lines that are selected may be silly and make little sense. However, they let people examine the topics in an entertaining way.

When a story line has been written, ask participants to look at the situation from the person's (health population) point of view. Ask the group to read "About health strategies." Then ask them to read "About values."

When finished, ask participants to break into groups and discuss what health strategies the person will need to manage the situation they are in well. Do the same thing for values.

Next, repeat the process for a child. Read the following example and write it down for participants to read.

Ron is 3 years old. He needs to use a walking support for the next 5 years until he can have an operation to correct the situation.

Ask participants to return to groups and discuss Ron as if they were his parent. What health strategies and values could be used to empower Ron to manage his situation? Remind participants that they can refer to the topic pages in the Participant Resource if they like.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

5

Make the Most of the Participant Resource

During most of the workshop, participants learn by doing the activities rather than by reading the information in the Participant Resource. Based on your own preference and that of the group, choose a topic from this workshop to further explore in the Participant Resource. Turn to the section and lead an informal discussion. Repeat for other topics if you have the time.

Encourage parents to use the Participant Resource at home to:
- review the topics
- get more information
- get ideas for learning activities with children
- share their new knowledge with friends

MODULE SEVEN

Health and Learning

Christine Tripp

Introduction

There is a direct link between health and learning. The physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social resources a person has largely determine a person's ability to learn effectively. Examples:

- We learn more effectively if we have a feeling of physical well-being (physical health).
- Our stress level (emotional health) plays a significant role in our ability to concentrate.
- Life is a series of problem-solving activities. To do this most successfully requires that we have the resources to think critically, creatively and rationally (mental health).
- A person who does not believe he or she can learn (spiritual health), won't.
- Human beings depend on others to learn. Our ability to relate to others (social health) is essential to learning.

This module provides the big picture. It gives insights into the different ways we can view health holistically, as well as the role holistic health plays in young children's learning.

Health and Learning Topics

Topic 34: Health Resources
Topic 35: Health Influencers
Topic 36: Health Populations
Topic 37: Values
Topic 38: Health Strategies

TOPIC 34

Health Resources

Definition

Health is not the absence of illness. Health is the resources we have to manage our lives, such as physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources.

Key messages

- You have an essential role in supporting the development of your children's health resources.
- There is a direct link between health resources and life management.
- There is a direct link between health resources and learning.

Examples

- physical health
  - having our bodies function to the best of their ability
  - physical resources to manage an illness or a disability
- emotional health
  - taking responsibility
  - managing stress well
  - balancing our different roles
  - being tolerant toward ourselves and others
  - enjoying life
  - expressing feelings in positive ways
- mental health
  - ability to solve problems rationally and realistically
  - skills to manage stress
  - ability to relax and have fun
  - having a positive attitude
- spiritual health
  - having hope
  - ability to love and be loved
  - willingness to trust
  - valuing self, others and those in the community
- social health
  - quality of our friendships
  - our communication skills
  - family relationships
  - having sufficient income to support ourselves and our families

About health resources

We face difficult situations throughout our lives; there are no guarantees. So, what can we do? Think of health as a life bank account. This bank takes health deposits and health withdrawals. People put in deposits of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources.

There are times when we have to take health deposits out of our bank. We may face a health issue, marriage issue, financial problem, physical difficulty or an issue of self-esteem. This is when we are glad to have a bank of resources we can call on to see us through a difficult time. When things get back on track, we can make health deposits again.

Parents can teach children how to make their own health deposits, as well as make health deposits for them. The more time parents spend focusing on the development of health resources, the more they are supporting their children's lifelong learning opportunities.

Organizations and people who can support you in developing your children's health resources include:

- family, friends and neighbours
- family resource centres and community centres
- minister, rabbi, priest or other spiritual leader
- doctor, nurse practitioner or public health nurse
- chiropractors, naturopathic doctors, herbalists and massage therapists
- counsellors, therapists and social workers
- government departments, like Social Services
- non-profit organizations and support groups
- early childhood educators and teachers
- organizations that promote a healthy mind, body and spirit, like the YM/YWCA
- schools, colleges and universities

How do health resources affect children's lifelong learning?

Babies and small children are totally dependent on their parents or other caregivers for health resources. We provide physical health resources in the form of nutrition, safety and protection from illness. We provide spiritual health resources in the form of trust, love, hope, self-esteem and faith. We provide emotional health resources by supporting thinking processes and understanding. We provide social health resources in the form of relationships and community. Children use the home and the family to understand health.

There is a direct link between health resources and learning. Children who have the health resources necessary to manage their lives well naturally want to learn. Nutrition, sleep, self-esteem, opportunities to think creatively and interaction with others are some of the tools for learning. Children cannot fulfil their learning potential if they are hungry, have low self-esteem, are not encouraged and don't relate with others.

Parents usually know their children better than anyone else. They have a sense of when their children's physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources are up to par and when they are not. Society has built systems to help us with health and learning, but these systems can never replace the daily interaction between child and parent. Parents are often the experts on their children's social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellness.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

ACTIVITY for parents

Health charts

This activity shows how important you are to your child's health. Fill out the following chart to see the impact you have.

Age of your child in years: ☐ x 365 = ☐ days

This is the number of days that you have had responsibility for your child's health. Fill in the numbers below based on the age of your child or use a check if your answer is "countless."

Physical Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Meals I have prepared
- ☐ Baths I have given
- ☐ Times I have dressed her or helped her to dress
- ☐ Times I have taken him to the doctor
- ☐ Times I have been up in the night with him
- ☐ Times I have saved her life
- ☐ Cuts, bruises and infections I have taken care of
- ☐ Times I have cared for him during illness

Emotional Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Times we have spent exploring the world together
- ☐ Times I have set limits
- ☐ Times we have spent imagining together
- ☐ Times we have played

Mental Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Times I have figured out what my child was trying to tell me
- ☐ Times I got someone to give me a mental break from my child
- ☐ Times I have set limits for my child
- ☐ Times I have not liked my child's behaviour
- ☐ Times I said "No" and kept my position
- ☐ Times we had a wonderful experiences discovering things together

Spiritual Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Times I have held him
- ☐ Times I have shown my love
- ☐ Times we have spent exploring nature
- ☐ Times I have shown her she is wonderful
- ☐ Times I have shown her she is respected
- ☐ Times I have shown him I trust him
- ☐ Times I have shown her hope
- ☐ Times I have read to him

Social Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Number of meals we have eaten together
- ☐ Time in hours spent talking together
- ☐ Number of family talks
- ☐ Amount of time spent with adults
- ☐ Amount of time spent with friends

That's a lot of hours! Think of how important you are for your child's health!

TOPIC 35

Health Influencers

Definition

Health influencers are all the things that affect our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health.

Examples

- Culture and the family's religious affiliations influence children's spiritual practices and spiritual health.
- Family environment influences children's social health. Loving, trusting parents positively influence their children's lifelong ability to relate to people.
- Education is a powerful influencer on family income.
- Diet influences children's physical and mental health.

Key messages

- Culture, heredity, gender and race can influence children's health.

About health influencers

The following factors influence your children's health and also affect their learning.

You may want to think about the influencers that we cannot change, and those we can.

Income and employment
When families have sufficient income and steady employment, they are better able to provide the basic necessities of life, such as food and shelter.

Preventive health practices
Parents are responsible for using Canada's preventive health system to ensure that their children stay healthy, such as regular visits to the doctor, immunization programs and regular dental care.

Gender
Society often treats boys and girls, men and women, differently. Societal roles, child-rearing practices, and employment and educational opportunities are often affected by gender.

Heredity
Genetic traits and biological characteristics such as skin colour, dominant blood types and body proportions can influence health and physical appearance. When we are born, we inherit

certain characteristics from our parents, including our physical features, some of our natural abilities and our risk factors for some illnesses.

Ability
People have a wide range of physical and mental abilities, both inherited and developed.

Social supports
Social supports and networks provide access to health resources for parents and children. When social supports are available, learning and the ability to solve health problems are enhanced.

Environments
An environment can be physical or social. A healthy environment provides the people in it with quality physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health and the opportunity to learn.

Child care
The way that young children are cared for in the family, the community and society determines their lifelong health and learning. The attention a society gives to its children determines its future.

Culture
Culture gives us our roots, our sense of place and our identity. It also strongly affects health and learning.

Education
Education is one of the most powerful factors in providing opportunities to be healthy and to learn.

How do health influencers affect children's lifelong learning?

Each health influencer is a health resource and plays a part in the well-being of children and families. A "health promotion" or "resource model" focuses on what we do have, not on what we don't have. Everyone has physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources. These may vary during our lives; we have always some.

Often, we don't see the health resources we have. We don't take the time to think about our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social strengths. Remember when you brought your first child home. It suddenly hits you – for the next 20 years, or more, you are responsible for this tiny person! You have never done this before! How are you going to manage? You manage because you already have many of the health and parenting resources you need. Focusing on the health resources you and your child have, rather than on the ones you don't have, will enhance your children's lifelong learning.

ACTIVITY
for parents

Health influencer checklist

Check each health influencer that is an issue in your family now.

☐ Income and Employment
☐ Preventive Health Practices
☐ Gender
☐ Heredity
☐ Ability
☐ Social Supports
☐ Environments
☐ Child Care
☐ Culture
☐ Education

Check each health influencer that was an issue in your family when you were a child.

☐ Income and Employment
☐ Preventive Health Practices
☐ Gender
☐ Heredity
☐ Ability
☐ Social Supports
☐ Environments
☐ Child Care
☐ Culture
☐ Education

Check each health influencer that you think will be an issue for your child when he is your age.

☐ Income and Employment
☐ Preventive Health Practices
☐ Gender
☐ Heredity
☐ Ability
☐ Social Supports
☐ Environments
☐ Child Care
☐ Culture
☐ Education

TOPIC 36

Health Populations

Definition

Health populations are groups of people who have been placed into categories of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health.

Examples

- individuals with a physical disability
- gifted children
- children who have learning disabilities
- children with speech difficulties
- youth who smoke

Key messages

- Your family as a unit and your children as individuals are placed into different health populations.
- All children are placed into multiple health populations based on health influencers, for example, family income, gender, ability, disability.
- Placing children into health populations is a way to keep an ongoing "health check" on many physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health issues based on the different categories in which they can be placed.

About health populations

Use these four categories to think about your health resources and managing them:

1. as an individual
2. as a member of a family
3. as a member of a community
4. as part of society

Individual

We all have responsibility for our own health. We need to constantly work to make sure that the health resources in our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health "accounts" have enough "deposits" when we need them.

During children's preschool years, parents are helping them to develop lifelong health resources. Parents and all adults who interact with children model behaviour affecting health – they provide opportunities for their children to learn about health resources, allow them to learn about their health resources independently and directly teach them about health resources.

Family

We bond with those who love, care for and support us. The family is where we first learn about health resources and life management, and where we recharge our health batteries. Raising a family is difficult. There are times when the health needs of one member may consume all the family health resources.

Community
The community must be healthy to ensure the well-being of its children. Think of the impact on a community when a major employer shuts down. People have less money, more stress and fewer supports. A healthy community should have enough resources to meet the health and learning needs of all its members, particularly the youngest.

Society
To have healthy communities, we need healthy countries and a healthy planet. We are all citizens of the same world. The global economy has made us interdependent socially, economically and environmentally.

ACTIVITY for parents

Reflecting on health populations

Take some time to reflect on the different populations your child may be placed into or has been placed into from birth to age 6. Beside each of these populations, write examples of the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health issues that go along with being in this population. Remember that the word "population" here refers to a group and is used in a broad way. For example, in the case of health, population with heart problems, population with hearing difficulties, etc.

How do health populations affect children's lifelong learning?

Children are placed into "populations" all the time. In fact, they are placed into a number of populations. Each population they fit into has health implications. Imagine some categories:

- special needs/average/gifted
- physically challenged/physically gifted
- single-parent family/two-parent family
- underweight/overweight
- high income/low income

Each population that children are placed into has physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health considerations. It is important for adults to understand the implication of having a child in a particular population.

The different populations that children are placed into can have a dramatic impact on learning and health.

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TOPIC 37

Values

Definition

Values are the principles, standards and attitudes that we think are important, for example:

- sharing
- caring
- balance
- equality
- social justice
- respect
- choice
- freedom

Examples

- the right to an education
- the balance of work and family time
- treating men and women the same
- respecting other cultures
- keeping our environment healthy

Key messages

- The family and the community are where lifelong values are learned.
- Values can be both negative and positive.
- Values determine the way a society works.

About values

Parents instil their own values and the values of the society in their children. Parents who value moderation pass that value on to their children. Parents who demonstrate concern for others teach their children to be caring and compassionate.

Values are not always positive. "Sharing" is a positive word, but only when sharing is a positive experience. Having to share food when there is not enough to eat is not a positive experience. Caring is positive, but not if we spend too much time caring for others and neglect to care for ourselves.

Parents have a lot of influence over the way their children view the world. Most of what children value is learned first from their family. In homes where respect and sharing are part of daily life, these values are learned. In homes where prejudice and self-centeredness are part of life, these too are learned.

Values are also determined by the way people view themselves, each other and the world. Individual accomplishment and self-interest are often highly valued in our society. Tomorrow's adults will need to think more globally, economically, socially and environmentally.

Review the values listed in the definition. Think about what you are doing as parents to foster the values you think are important.

How do values affect children's lifelong learning?

Very young children are busy developing a value system. They do not understand the adult concepts of right and wrong, and are forming their own code of ethics and behaviour by watching, listening and interacting with others. They rely on the attitudes and values of family and others to determine how they should behave. This can be confusing because different adults in a child's life may place value on different things. One parent may value reading, but the other may not. A grandparent might be religious, when the parents are not.

Children become quite independent by about 3 or 4 years old. They are constantly assessing everything and everyone they come into contact with. Using thinking, language and knowledge, children test theories and push boundaries.

Adults use their value systems to manage their daily lives. Think of how you manage your intimate relationships, the food you eat, the care of your body and your job. All this and much more is determined by your value system, or what you think is important. We see the world through our values, which are formed early in life. Our values may change, grow and evolve as we learn more and have more experiences. While our ages and stages of life bring about shades of differences in our values, much of what we value throughout our lives is determined in our early years.

Our attitudes and values determine the importance of learning. If we do not think it is important to learn, we will find learning difficult.

Parents who:
- foster a love of learning
- value exploring the world
- value being open to the views and beliefs of others
- explain why they value certain things
- understand the role of values in the learning process
- recognize their role in modelling and teaching values
- teach that children of all races should be treated the same

... are giving their children the opportunity to develop a positive value system for life.

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ACTIVITY
for parents

Writing a letter to your child(ren)

Think about each of the values listed in the definition and choose the three that are most important to you. Imagine it is 20 years from now. Write a letter to your child(ren) telling them why you want them to learn and practise the three values you have chosen.

1. ______________________________
2. ______________________________
3. ______________________________

Date ______________________________

Dear ______________________________

You are an adult now and on your own. Here are some of the values I have tried to pass on to you and that I hope you will pass on to your children.

____

____

____

____

____

____

Love,

TOPIC 38

Health Strategies

Definition

Health strategies are resources we have and develop to manage our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health.

Examples

- exercising on a regular basis
- taking children for regular medical and dental checkups
- protecting our environment
- helping to build recreation facilities

Key messages

- There is a direct link between children's capacity to learn and their health resources.
- Children depend on parents, the community and government to provide them with health resources.
- Parents have a responsibility to teach health strategies that enable children to manage their lives well.
- Each child is unique, and so is each health strategy.

About health strategies

We often take our health for granted. Usually, it is not until we are faced with a health issue that we say, "I had better do something about this." For example, if you have an accident you handle the situation by using strategies such as medical resources that are available, your personal knowledge of health, your insurance. The following are examples of developing your children's health strategies.

Physical health: You regularly take your child to participate in an organized sport event. She learns coordination and body awareness, and enhances her muscle development and lung capacity.

Emotional health: Your child sometimes talks out of turn. You develop an approach of giving your child full attention when it is her turn to talk. This makes her feel good about waiting her turn.

Mental health: You go for a walk with your child and see a squirrel. You talk to him about the problems a squirrel has to solve raising a family.

Spiritual health: Your child has shown a sensitivity to others. You buy a pet for him. By caring for the animal, he learns strategies of caring for and about others.

Social health: Your child is overly aggressive. You seek help to find out what to do about it, and apply this knowledge to your child who learns how to manage his aggression.

How do health strategies affect children's lifelong learning?

Early learning is lifelong learning. Research on brain development tells us that many strategies we use during our lifetime in the areas of health and learning are determined by the time a child is 5 or 6 years of age (Steinhauer, 1999).

The brain patterns for emotional health are wired in by the time a child is 2 years old. How people react to situations is wired in at the same time. Self-esteem, respect for self and others, our belief in our capacity to learn and many other life issues are learned during these early years.

The early years are the time when the brain accepts countless messages and develops patterns for lifelong health and learning. Health and learning do not happen in isolation – they depend on one another.

ACTIVITY for parents

Health-y times

Parents have the primary responsibility for their child's mental, physical, social, spiritual and emotional health. There are others such as extended family and caregivers who have a major role as well.

We often take for granted that children will develop health resources naturally over time. However, providing opportunities for children to learn about health through activities can often enhance the child's understanding of health.

Think about a time you went for a walk or took your child grocery shopping.

Give one or two examples of opportunities to further develop your child's understanding of health.

Physical Health:
Example – "No, we're not going to get the Honey Sugar Cereal because..."

Emotional Health:
Example – "I know you're tired. Do you think you can hang in for 5 more minutes?"

Mental (cognitive) Health:
Example – "There are three kinds of cookies. Which one would you like? Why?"

Social Health:
Example – "We don't push in line for the slide because..."

Spiritual Health:
Example – "Wow, you really made me feel good when you..."

Workshop Eight: A Framework for Learning

8:1

1

Share Learning Experiences

Invite participants to share some things that have happened with their children over the past week. How were these things learning experiences?

As participants share, make connections between these experiences and the topics you have discussed. By framing these experiences within a learning context, participants will see that they don't have to be teachers in a school set up at home. They just need to be aware of – and take advantage of – all natural opportunities for learning. Point out that participants are giving their children enriched learning every day.

Explore the enriched learning that is taking place every day:

- What did your child seem to be learning on his own?
- What do you think your child is learning from you?
- What are you learning from your child?
- How are you using PAT in your everyday activities?

2

Discuss Life Management Topic

Turn to the life management section at the back of the Participant Resource (page 147) and choose one topic. Lead an informal discussion.

Space is provided below for you to prepare several questions to get participants talking and to help you keep the discussion on track.

Life Management Topic ____________________

Questions ____________________

____

____

3

Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

Explain that doing the hands-on learning activities will bring the topics to life.

This week's topics and learning activities are:

CYCLE #1
Topic 39: Physical Factors
Topic 40: Environmental Factors
Topic 41: Social Factors
Topic 42: Emotional Factors
Topic 43: Neurological Factors
Learning Activity – *Wheel of Dreams*

CYCLE #2
Topic 44: Inquiry
Learning Activity – *Daddy, What Is It?*

CYCLE #3
Topic 45: Exploration
Topic 46: Discovery
Topic 47: Making Connections
Learning Activity – *Mommy, What Does It Do?*

4

Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

In this step, you will take the participants through the Experiencing Learning Cycle three times. To help you do this, the three stages are graphically identified both here and on the Experiencing Learning Cycle poster.

BRIEFING　LEARNING ACTIVITY　DEBRIEFING

1

BRIEFING

TOPIC 39

Physical Factors

(page 125, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: How do you think physical development has an effect on learning?

Examples: What other examples can you share from your own experience?

Key Messages: What things are children not able to learn until they are physically ready?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 40

Environmental Factors

(page 128, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some factors in your children's environment that influence their learning?

Examples: What are some other examples of positive learning environments?

Key Messages: Comment on the message that you have control over most of the environmental factors in your children's life.

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 41

Social Factors

(page 130, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Can you think of any other people or relationships that affect your children?

Examples: What are some other positive relationships between your children and the people in their lives?

Key Messages: Why are healthy social relationships necessary for children to learn?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 42

Emotional Factors

(page 132, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: How do your feelings affect your learning?

Examples: How do your children's emotions affect their learning? Can you think of an example of when positive emotions have enhanced your children's learning? How do negative emotions interfere with learning?

Key Messages: How do these key messages fit with what you observe in your daily life with your children?

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 43

Neurological Factors

(page 135, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What are some things that affect the development of a child's brain?

Examples: Do you think that your child's brain is more complex than the most powerful computer?

Check In

Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Wheel of Dreams

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do

Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topics while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to become aware of the five categories of factors that affect children's learning

Materials

- plasticine, or playdough (2 parts flour, 1 part salt, 1 part water)
- styrofoam tray or piece of cardboard
- sealable plastic bags
- construction paper (2 pieces for each participant)
- paper fasteners

Activity

Ask participants to make a model of a child using the plasticine or playdough. When they have finished their model, ask them to share some of the dreams they have for that child.

Remind them of the five categories of factors that affect children's learning now, and which will affect children's future learning, health and work.

Give each participant two pieces of construction paper. Ask them to make two circles, one a few inches larger than the other. Have them put the smaller circle on top and put the circles together with a paper fastener in the centre to make two wheels that can be turned. Have participants divide the centre wheel into five pie wedges and label them with the factors that affect learning – physical, environmental, social, emotional and neurological. Around the edge of the outer wheel, participants print examples of learning goals for their child. If they need some ideas, invite the group to brainstorm to come up with as many examples as they can.

When they have finished making their wheels, show them how to use them by using reading as an example. Turn the wheel to match "physical factors" with "reading." Ask participants how physical factors affect reading (eyes able to focus on print, hearing to distinguish sounds, etc.). Then, turn the wheel to match "environmental factors" with reading. Ask how environmental factors affect reading (having books available, seeing parents read, etc.). Continue around the wheel, briefly discussing how each of the factors affects a child's ability to learn to read.

Ask participants to put the model of the child in the centre of the wheel as they work in pairs or groups, using the examples they have printed on their wheels to discuss how each factor affects a child's learning.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- **understand the topics**
- **make the link between the learning activity and the topics**
- **make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences**

Suggested prompts:
- **What do you feel and think about the experience?**
- **Why are the topics important for children's learning development?**
- **How can you apply the topics with children?**

2

BRIEFING

TOPIC 44

Inquiry

(page 138, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Do your children ever ask questions?

Examples: What other examples can you share from your own experience?

Key Messages: What would happen to your children's learning if they never asked questions?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Daddy, What Is It?

Teaching Approach: Talk and Do
Lead participants in an interactive discussion about the topic while they do the activity.

Purpose

- to show the importance of asking questions

Materials

- an object that might be unfamiliar to many of the participants, for example, a tool, carving, toy, book, music tape, picture, small antique, fragrance or an imported vegetable or fruit.

Activity
Show the unfamiliar object to the participants and encourage them to inquire about it. Print on the board or flipchart: Who? What? When? Where? Why? How? Ask participants to model using these cue words as if they were encouraging children to ask questions. Answer some of the questions, but admit that you do not know all the answers and that participants do not have to know them either.

DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

3

BRIEFING

TOPIC 45

Exploration

(page 140, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What do children use to explore? (the five senses) How is this related to the previous topics of Multisensory Learning and Observe?

Examples: What other examples of children exploring the world can you share?

Key Messages: How does playing with building blocks help children gain prior knowledge that can be used in other situations?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 46

Discovery

(page 142, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: What is one thing that your children have recently discovered?

Examples: What are some other things your children have recently discovered?

Key Messages: What is necessary for discoveries to be made? Discuss how observation, inquiry and exploration are the ways we and our children gather the information that leads to a discovery.

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

TOPIC 47

Making Connections

(page 144, Participant Resource)

Read and discuss the definition, examples and key messages. Suggested prompts for discussion follow.

Definition: Do you remember the thinking process we use when we want to link new information with our prior knowledge? (compare and contrast)

Examples: Have you connected one of the examples with your own personal experience? How?

Key Messages: How do these messages fit with what you see in your daily life with your children?

Check In
Does anyone need to be more clear about the definition, examples or key messages before we move on to the learning activity?

LEARNING ACTIVITY

Mommy, What Does It Do?

Teaching Approach: Do Then Talk
Participants explore materials, then discuss the topics.

Purpose

- to demonstrate how we learn by exploring, discovering and making connections
- to experience the PAT model

Materials

- the same unfamiliar object that was used in the previous activity

Activity

Provide materials by passing around the object to all participants.

Allow participants to explore the object using their five senses. How does it feel? smell? look? What can I do with it? Will it roll? reflect? bounce? cut?

Teach by discussing and inviting participants to think out loud about the object, to share information, and to speculate about where it came from, how it was made, how it might be used, etc.

Ask them to view the object through fresh eyes as a child would, and to continue asking questions.

Ask participants what they have discovered about the object. What new information do they now have about this object?

Point out that they are using lots of prior knowledge about similar objects which helps them learn about this one. They have been "making connections." Invite several participants to share some of the connections they have been making as they inquired, explored and discovered information about the object. (It feels like..., It reminds me of..., I knew it was used for... because...)

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DEBRIEFING

Ensure that participants:
- understand the topics
- make the link between the learning activity and the topics
- make the activity their own by filtering it through their own knowledge and experiences

Suggested prompts:
- **What** do you feel and think about the experience?
- **Why** are the topics important for children's learning development?
- **How** can you apply the topics with children?

5 Make the Most of the Participant Resource

During most of the workshop, participants learn by doing the activities rather than by reading the information in the Participant Resource. Based on your own preference and that of the group, choose a topic from this workshop to further explore in the Participant Resource. Turn to the section and lead an informal discussion. Repeat for other topics if you have the time.

Encourage parents to use the Participant Resource at home to:
- review the topics
- get more information
- get ideas for learning activities with children
- share their new knowledge with friends

MODULE EIGHT

A Framework for Learning

Introduction

The first part of this module (Factors That Affect Learning) examines five health-related factors that affect learning. Specific examples of the role of these factors in learning are given. The goal of this section is to have participants understand that the quality of children's learning is mostly determined by these five factors.

Some of the factors can be significantly altered or changed completely by others, others can be changed little or not at all. Because a factor, for example a physical disability, cannot be changed, it does not mean that effective learning cannot and will not take place. Regardless of the factor, participants should look at the learning resources the child has and that are available externally, and not focus on the ones that are not available.

The second part of this module (Understanding the World) explains how learning is natural and that it is related directly to school learning.

Young children do not think about learning, they just learn. The four processes in this part are ones that children use to understand their world. As they ask countless questions, examine everything they come into contact with, find uses for things, use things in imaginative ways, and figure things out, they are "doing science, social studies, math, art and music." Children who have developed skills of inquiry, exploration, discovery and making connections are well on their way to having successful school experiences.

Factors That Affect Learning Topics

Topic 39: Physical Factors
Topic 40: Environmental Factors
Topic 41: Social Factors
Topic 42: Emotional Factors
Topic 43: Neurological Factors

Understanding the World Topics

Topic 44: Inquiry
Topic 45: Exploration
Topic 46: Discovery
Topic 47: Making Connections

TOPIC 39

Physical Factors

Definition

Physical factors include everything that has to do with a child's physical development and abilities, for example:

- wellness
- growth
- nervous system development
- development of physical skills
- physical disabilities
- nutrition

Examples

- Babies can learn only about things close to them because they can't move around on their own or see very far.
- Toddlers cannot move around and learn about new things that are out of reach until they are physically ready to walk.
- A 3-year-old's lips, tongue and vocal cords have developed the coordination to speak and ask questions.
- A 5- or 6-year-old's ability to learn to read is influenced by vision, hearing, health, rest and nutrition.

Key messages

- Learning depends on physical growth and wellness.
- There are physical factors parents can control (such as nutrition).
- There are physical factors parents can often influence (such as buying glasses to correct a child's vision).
- There are physical factors that are genetic or developmental (such as a physical or mental disability).
- Children cannot learn to do something physical until they are developmentally ready.

About physical factors

Physical factors have a profound effect on learning. Many of these factors are beyond your control because they are genetically or developmentally determined, but your response to them is very important.

When you know how age and developmental factors affect what your children are ready and able to learn, you will be able to relax and enjoy their growing skills and accomplishments. For example:

- 1-year-olds do not have the physical control necessary for toileting. A child will usually show an interest in learning about and be ready to use the potty or toilet at about the age of 3.
- Toddlers have many more learning opportunities as they develop the physical strength and coordination to walk and explore.
- The muscle control of 5-year-olds enable them to master skills such as balancing, catching, hopping and climbing.

As children grow and develop, certain physical abilities and new types of learning become possible. For example, the muscles of the neck and back must be strong enough before they can sit up. The nerves and small muscles of the hand and fingers must develop enough for them to hold a pencil and learn to write.

Pay close attention and encourage children to do things they are physically ready to do. If you feel that they are not progressing or notice a problem – for example, a 3-year-old who isn't talking, or a child who doesn't seem to hear well – see your doctor.

Some physical factors can be real obstacles to learning, like poor vision or hearing, lack of mobility or illness. You probably can't change these things, but you can make it easier for children to deal with them by getting help from family, friends, the community and health professionals.

How do physical factors affect children's lifelong learning?

Physical factors affect learning at all ages and stages of our lives. Young children are limited by their developing bodies; older adults are limited by their gradually declining abilities. At all ages, we should try to optimize our physical wellness – our lifelong learning depends on it!

When we understand and accept children's physical readiness or unreadiness for certain things and celebrate their growing abilities, we lay the foundation for their high self-esteem and feeling of competence. We are also laying the foundation for early learning which in turn sets the stage for future learning.

ACTIVITY for parents

Thinking of physical factors

List some of the physical factors that affect your own learning. For example:

- Do you have any allergies to food, products or the environment?
- Do you wear glasses or a hearing aid?
- Are you getting enough sleep? Do you have lots of energy?

Think about how these factors directly affect you.

Picture your child. List some of the things she has learned lately. Is she learning to walk? Is she learning to use the potty? Is she into everything? Think about how physical factors affect her learning. Which of these are developmental (happen when the child is physically ready, but not before)?

Do you know which foods give you the "most bang for your buck" nutritionally? For example, do you know the difference between "apple drink" and "apple juice"? Do you know the role that fat plays in physical development of young children? How much calcium does your child need each day? You'll feel more confident when you've learned all you can.

TOPIC 40

Environmental Factors

Definition

Environmental factors include anything in the child's world that influences learning, for example, housing, books, toys, pets, TV and nature.

Examples

- The colourful mobile above a baby's bed helps him learn to focus and follow objects with his eyes.
- A 2-year-old plays in the bathtub and discovers that some objects sink and others float.
- A 3-year-old sits with a picture book and reads herself a story while looking at the pictures.
- A 5-year-old plays in the park and looks at ants.
- An adult takes the scenic drive home from work and decides to walk to work the rest of the week.

Key messages

- You have control over most of the environmental factors in your children's life.
- Environmental factors affect your children's learning.

About environmental factors

Since parents have a lot of control over environmental factors, it's important to be aware of how much you can do to make the world a learning laboratory.

Children are learning all day, every day! Everything they see, hear, smell, touch or taste teaches them something. As you try to provide the best possible learning environment, ask yourself: "Does this environment provide positive learning opportunities?" and "Is this environment safe?"

Children need to explore, do and talk about real things. Toddlers get into everything, not to be naughty, but because they are curious and eager to find out about the world. They have no prior knowledge to tell them what is or isn't safe, so it's important to ensure that the environment is childproof as well as interesting. The kitchen, garden, workshop, park, TV and computers are all part of your child's learning environment. But remember that even the best nature show on TV doesn't offer the same real-world, multisensory learning experience as a walk in the woods or a day at the beach.

Toys are an important part of your children's learning environment. Toys allow them to pretend, try out adult behaviours with child-sized tools, use their imaginations, make discoveries and soothe themselves. We joke about how young children often find the packaging more interesting than the toy inside. Maybe that's because they can do more and learn more with the box than with the expensive but less challenging toy.

When choosing a toy for children, think about how it can be used. Will it encourage them to be creative and use their imaginations, or can it only be used one way? Will it inspire active play? You might also want to consider the values that toys represent and whether or not these fit with the ones you want your child to have.

Simple toys often have many possibilities. For example, a sheet over two chairs can be a tent, a house or a cave. Mom's old skirt and blouse can become a dressup wardrobe for make-believe parties and trips to the office. Scrap paper and crayons or markers encourage children to draw and write.

Young children need lots of physically active play. Young bones and muscles need to be exercised regularly to develop. Many children are overweight or inactive. This is a health concern and limits learning by restricting mobility and decreasing self-esteem.

Some environmental factors can negatively affect children's learning. Check out your children's exposure to environmental pollutants like cigarette smoke, lead, poisons, PVCs (polyvinyl chlorides), and loud or continuous noise.

How do environmental factors affect children's lifelong learning?

Everything that children learn helps them to learn something else. It's like sticking things to the velcro ball of your brain – the bigger the velcro ball gets, the more you can stick to it. Children who learn about geometry and gravity while playing with building blocks or a rubber ball may better understand geometric theorems and principles of physics when they are older. Children who have access to books, pencils and paper may be more likely to love reading, writing and drawing throughout life. The more we learn, the more we want to learn.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Creative toys

Take a cardboard box. See how many ways you can use the box with your children. Try the same activity with containers, old clothes, pieces of wood and household items.

List your children's toys. What do they do with each toy? Which of these toys encourages creative play? Which don't?

List some things in your children's environment that are free and can be used to help learning. Old socks can be turned into puppets or beanbags, milk cartons can be used as houses in a miniature village, and toilet paper rolls make great binoculars. How many can you think of?

TOPIC 41

Social Factors

Definition

Social factors include the relationships and people in a child's life, for example:

- parents
- siblings
- relatives
- friends
- caregivers
- teachers
- community members
- pets
- imaginary friends

Examples

- Babies depend on parents most of the time to provide the multisensory learning experiences of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.
- Feelings of trust, love and safety are learned by relating to a few people, usually immediate family members.
- Preschoolers can safely test boundaries when there is mutual respect between parent and child.
- Optimal child learning happens when parents provide opportunities for exploration and discovery, allow the child to lead the learning, teach directly and indirectly, and model behaviour
- Adults are more motivated to learn when they have the support and encouragement of family and friends.

Key messages

- Social wellness is important for your children's learning.
- You can provide a positive social environment for learning.
- A variety of individuals and groups play a role in children's learning.

About social factors

The relationships we develop with others are a learning and health resource. Human beings are naturally social. We need to fulfil our basic needs for survival, fun, love and belonging, power and freedom. To do this, we need people.

Young children learn how to relate socially by being with people. They test others, not to be annoying, but to learn. If they don't learn social skills as young children, they may have trouble learning them throughout life.

Young children often appear to be thinking only of themselves. And they are! They are still learning important social skills like how to share and empathize with others. They don't have many social graces, so expect embarrassing moments. Remarking on Uncle Bob's big nose or telling a caller that you can't come to the phone because you're on the toilet is not meant to be mean or insensitive. Children simply speak their minds, often pointing out what adults think but would never say. Remember that young children are 24-hour learners, almost entirely dependent on adults to provide the social environment where learning can take place.

Pets and imaginary friends are social resources. They are always there, providing unconditional love and acceptance. Children use them to discover and explore relationships as well. You can sit children in front of the TV and they'll be quiet; but they probably won't learn as much as when you interact with them yourself.

We learn a lot about ourselves from others. Children have a right to stable, ongoing, supportive relationships with others – family, friends, caregivers, and eventually classmates and co-workers. Yes, it does take a whole village to raise a child!

How do social factors affect children's lifelong learning?

The more children interact with others, the more they learn about people and the world. They develop social skills, build confidence in their ability to get along with others, learn how to satisfy their needs for love and belonging, find out facts and opinions from others, learn how to share and to deal with conflict, and become fully developed, interdependent human beings.

ACTIVITIES for parents

Make a map

Create a map of your child's social life using the examples that are listed in the definition. List all family members, friends and other people who your child sees or has contact with regularly. Choose one at a time. Think of how they have affected your child's learning, and list them. For example, an older sister might take a child to the playground, play dress up or finger paint.

Keep a diary

Each evening for a week, write about your child's day. Focus on the interactions she had with other people and things. Compare how much she is learning from other people with what she is learning from things – for example, toys or TV.

Interactions

Pick a day when your child will be with you all day. Put a sheet of paper on the fridge. Each time you interact with your child, note the time and the activity. By the end of the day, you'll realize how much you are socializing with him.

TOPIC 42

Emotional Factors

Definition

Emotional factors are feelings shaped by our inborn temperament, personality, what we experience and what we are taught.

Examples

- Infants whose emotional needs are met when their parents care for, hold and cuddle them will be alert, responsive and able to begin the lifelong process of learning. They are learning empathy in their parents' arms.
- Toddlers who are becoming aware of their independence, showing strong impulses and perhaps a temper. Parents who help toddlers to manage their impulses are paving pathways to emotional intelligence.
- A 3-year-old wants to dress himself. He is self-motivated to master skills that are important to him and to his self-esteem.
- A 5-year-old is learning to tie her shoes. She tries again and again until she gets it right. She is demonstrating persistence and determination – signs of emotional intelligence.
- A neighbour gives you advice about caring for your newborn. You feel threatened, not supported.

Key messages

- As a parent, you have a strong influence on learning.
- Children are born with their own temperament, which affects their emotional responses.
- You can provide a positive emotional environment for learning.

About emotional factors

Emotional well-being and learning go hand-in-hand. Our emotions affect all other areas of our lives – our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health. We feel comfort and pleasure as we enjoy lunch with a friend, or pride and excitement when we watch our child take her first step. We feel upset and angry when someone criticizes us, or worried and fearful when our spouse is laid off at work, for example.

All humans experience a wide range of emotional responses. Not everyone responds to a situation in the same way. One person may respond to teasing with anger, another might laugh and reply with a joke. Why is there such a difference? Our emotional reactions are influenced by several factors – some are inborn, some are taught. We all have our own neurological-chemical makeup that gives us our own inborn temperament or disposition (Barskey, 1988). Some people back away from too much excitement and stress. They need quiet time by themselves to maintain emotional health. Other people like lots of action. They need social stimulation and risk taking to satisfy their emotional needs.

What does this have to do with learning? All personality types will learn best if the learning situation is adapted to their needs. For example, a sensitive child will not learn well in a noisy, cluttered environment, or one where there are frequent changes or too many new experiences. On the other hand, a child who is not happy unless he is constantly in motion may not learn well if he is confined to a quiet corner. Parents can't change their child's natural emotional makeup, but they can be sensitive to their child's needs and try to make the emotional environment as healthy as possible.

Parents play a crucial part in influencing these emotional factors, for example:

- self-esteem (feeling capable, in control and valued)
- stress (a lack of security, unrealistic expectations)
- understanding self and others (emotional intelligence)

Children's self-esteem depends on:

- being capable – Give them chances to develop their strengths and talents. Let them make mistakes and don't always run to the rescue. Succeeding at a difficult task is a great self-esteem booster!
- having some control – Let them make some age-appropriate choices. Do they want peas or carrots for lunch? Would they like to wear running shoes or sandals?
- feeling valued – They need to know you love them no matter what. Point out how and why they are special and lovable. Don't put her down with negative comments, and don't shower her with false praise. Indiscriminate praise becomes meaningless. Children may no longer trust your judgement if they know the praise was unearned.

Stress – both positive and negative – is a reality and we learn from it. A parent's role is to see that whatever stress a child experiences enhances rather than interferes with learning. If your child is upset by a new situation, prepare her for it by rehearsing it.

Too much stress in a child's life will severely limit learning. Emotional distress overwhelms the thinking part of the brain and interferes with healthy learning. In his book *Emotional*

Intelligence. Goleman refers to a "neural tripwire" that allows strong emotions to "capture and drive much of the rest of the brain – including the rational mind" (1995: 17). In such circumstances, another kind of learning may be taking place – the brain circuits are being programmed for fear, anger, failure and withdrawal.

Parents are powerful models of how to handle emotions. Parents who treat their children's feelings with respect (modelling empathy), coach them in how to express anger safely, how to express caring and how to solve conflicts peacefully are teaching lifelong emotional intelligence. Their children are likely to have lower stress levels and better physical health, be liked by other children, have fewer behaviour problems and be better learners.

How do emotional factors affect children's lifelong learning?

Emotional intelligence (which includes self-control, persistence, self-motivation and empathy) has more effect on life success than I.Q. (Goelman, 1995). Most importantly, these lessons can be taught in childhood. These early emotional lessons actually sculpt the brain's circuitry and form healthy emotional habits for life.

The emotional lessons children learn from you during these early years will determine their success throughout life – in their relationships, work and understanding themselves. The emotional connections wired into their brain during childhood will affect their willingness and ability to learn, their physical health, their social life and certainly their happiness.

ACTIVITIES for parents

It's hard to concentrate!

Think of a time when you were upset or worried about a personal issue. Did you find it hard to concentrate on anything else? In a very emotional situation, we often find it difficult to do even the simplest tasks, let alone learn new things.

Getting along

Your child's playmate has just grabbed the toy your toddler was playing with. Here is an opportunity to help your child cope with his anger and deal with a peer. What do you do?

TOPIC 43

Neurological Factors

Definition

A neurological factor is anything that affects the brain, the control centre for all our conscious and unconscious acts.

Key messages

- The brain is a complex organ.
- Brain stimulation in the early years is essential for lifelong learning.
- Certain learning difficulties are the result of the way the brain is "wired."

Examples

- The infant brain is reacting to stimuli in ways that are geared for survival. The brain is not "thinking" as we understand it. It is figuring out how to think.
- A baby's life is full of first impressions. Think of these as small streams, and then as rivers of the mind. An infant's early experiences form the rivers of trust, hope and love.
- The brain has a natural desire to make sense of things. That's why children ask hundreds of questions, often about the same thing. They want to learn and they look to the people who they think have the answers – parents.
- A child's brain understands things through concrete sensory experience, not through abstract discussion. Young children have to experience their world before they understand it. They can't talk about things they have not experienced.
- Most adults use both concrete and abstract concepts. Adults use their prior knowledge and experience to link, make connections and think in ways that are beyond the capability of young children.

About neurological factors

When learning is designed to fit the way the brain functions most naturally, we learn more easily, remember more and make better connections. The brain learns best by using as many senses as possible. If you use all five senses to learn something, you have allowed your brain to make connections in five or more different places. That's why young children use as many senses as possible to learn. They see, touch, listen to, smell, feel and taste almost everything they can get their hands on. They are learning the natural way – the way the brain learns best.

We come into the world wanting to learn. The brain soaks up knowledge at an amazing rate. It handles millions of bits of data per second. We make decisions about where to shift our eyes and attention over 100,000 times a day! We are taking in information even when we are not aware of it – 99% of what we learn is unconscious (Jensen, 1996).

The brain appears to have certain blocks of time when there are mental growth spurts – 18 to 36 months of age for walking and talking, 5 to 7 years old for reading and writing, and 11 to 15 years old for abstract reasoning and social maturity (Jensen, 1996).

The brain is a map-maker. Each item we learn is linked in some way with what we already know and stored in an area of the brain. Each person has a unique brain, so our mental maps are unique. That's why it's so important to provide a wide variety of learning options so that young children can develop their own maps in their own ways.

Some brains have trouble making certain kinds of maps. When the neurological paths take a detour, have pot holes or have confused connections, a person may find some kinds of learning difficult. Researchers have observed actual differences in the structure and functioning of the brains of people with learning disabilities. A learning disability is a disorder that affects a person's ability to interpret what is seen and heard, or to link and process information in the brain. Specific difficulties can occur in spoken or written language, in coordination, in self-control or in maintaining attention for a task.

Here are some important things to remember about the brain and learning (Jensen, 1996).

- The brain is not separate from the body. There is a real body-mind connection.
- Learning involves your body, your emotions, your attitudes and your experiences.
- We have two major levels of memory – short-term and long-term.
- The brain is integrated, but certain areas control most of a function, like seeing or breathing.
- You don't need to have your child's attention for very long to teach effectively. Short learning periods are usually the most effective with young children.
- We have natural learning styles through which we learn more easily.
- There are at least eight types of intelligence.
- We are not aware of 99% of what we learn.
- The brain is always trying to make sense out of what is happening.
- Nutrition is an important factor in the brain's ability to learn and operate.
- Individual "biological clocks" influence our learning.
- Music, humour, drama, role playing, games, dancing, running and other activities greatly enhance the brain's ability to learn.

How do neurological factors affect children's lifelong learning?

The way the brain is wired in early life greatly affects every area of future learning. Early learning experiences program the brain to react in certain ways. We know that children who do not feel safe or are not cuddled and loved do not learn well.

If a child's brain has developed neural connections as a result of sensory stimulation; if it has been shaped by loving attention and feelings of security; if it has been programmed for language through verbal interaction with adults; and if it has received the proper nutrition to grow – then that child's brain has been wired for learning.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

What can we do with this?

Give your child something she has not seen before. Ask her what it could be used for. Observe how she uses the environment to make up uses for the object. Her brain does this naturally. Try limiting the item to only one use and see how quickly your child loses interest. Suggest more options for its use and see how naturally she learns to play with it.

Which holds more?

Get a tall, narrow glass and a short, wide glass. Fill each glass with the same amount of juice. Ask your child which one he wants. He will probably want the taller one because he thinks this glass has more juice in it. Even if you show him that both glasses hold the same amount, his brain is not yet developed enough to grasp the concept. As his brain matures, he will reach a point (around 6 or 7 years old) when he can see that the glasses hold the same amount (Labinowitz, 1980).

TOPIC 44

Inquiry

Definition

Inquiry is a way of finding out about the world by asking questions.

Examples

- A baby inquires about her body by watching, reaching for, touching and finally tasting her toes.
- A toddler finds out about his parents' limits by testing their patience.
- A child asks why he needs his boots today, where the class will go on its outing and what time Dad will pick him up.
- A parent and child go for a walk in the woods and the child inquires about the trees, the animals and the sounds.

Key messages

- **Children naturally ask questions.**
- **Children learn about the world by asking questions.**
- **Children look to their parents to answer most of their questions.**
- **Encouraging children's questions is important.**
- **Most questions that children ask are natural, purposeful and meaningful.**

About inquiry

Children are little scientists developing theories about the world around them. Children relate first-time experiences to what they already know – their prior knowledge – to build their knowledge. Children also use inquiry to compare what they already know to what they want to find out. This means that they will ask questions, and more questions! Sometimes the questions are spoken; sometimes they are just actions or sounds.

Young children seem to question everything. When they look, listen, smell, touch and taste, they are expressing their natural curiosity. "How does this feel?" "What does it taste like?" "If I push it, what will happen?" "If I cry, will Mom or Dad come?"

A 3- to 6-year-old will often use inquiry to ask questions about things like food and mealtime – for example, "Why do I have to eat peas?" "What's in shepherd's pie?" "How many bites do I have to eat?" "When can I leave the table?"

How does inquiry affect children's lifelong learning?

Scientists always use inquiry to test their theories and create new ones. Similarly, children use inquiry to understand, test and use information. Otherwise, learning would be memorizing facts, rather than developing an understanding of the world.

Inquiry is important to the development of critical thinking. When we support children's natural curiosity by answering questions and encouraging more inquiry, we help to ensure that they will keep asking questions throughout their lives. If we do not develop the skill of inquiry in childhood, we are likely to take things at face value as adults.

ACTIVITY
to do with children

Inquiries

Help your child discover something new, like a gardening tool, a kitchen utensil, a piece of clothing, a photo from a magazine.

Model inquiry by thinking out loud about the item. "I wonder what this thing could be." "What do you think this is used for?" "Who is in this picture and what are they doing?"

Depending on the age of your child, you can work together on who, what, when, where, why and how questions, or you could explore an object using your five senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste), modelling and asking questions – for example, "What does the sandpaper feel like?" "How does the peanut butter cookie smell?" "What will happen if you blow into the soup"

Remember that you and your child are learning to inquire, not looking for a right answer. Your child's ability to inquire is as boundless as her imagination.

TOPIC 45

Exploration

Definition

Exploration is how we examine and investigate the world around us.

Examples

- A baby explores her world by looking around, touching objects and putting things in her mouth.
- A toddler explores his ability to make music banging on pots and pans.
- A child "tries on" different roles by pretending to be a mother, a doctor, a teacher or a super hero.
- Adults explore each other's interests before pursuing a friendship.

Key messages

- Children learn through exploration.
- Children explore in countless ways.
- Exploration is natural and fun for children.
- Children want to explore everything to create prior knowledge.
- Exploration does not have to lead to a specific answer.

About exploration

Children explore for the sake of exploring. They are developing prior knowledge. Exploration creates "files" in their mind to store new information. It also builds bridges between prior knowledge and new knowledge, allowing them to transfer information from one topic to another. Exploration is an important way of making sense of our world.

Preschool children use all their senses to explore real life every day. When they start to build, measure, make things fit, compare shapes, sizes and weights, they are developing their future math skills. When they are pretending, they explore critical and logical thinking. When they are helping to make muffins, they are exploring science in the kitchen.

How does exploration affect children's lifelong learning?

When we encourage exploration in the home, we allow children to figure out their own limits, develop decision-making skills and foster healthy adult boundaries. It's essential to support exploration in early childhood. If exploration skills are not developed in early childhood, building them later on will be much more difficult.

Exploration includes discovering limits. There are many boundaries for a child to explore. Children who understand that it is okay – natural and positive – to explore, will continue to observe, inquire and discover in school and throughout life.

As we get older, exploration often takes the form of calculated risk taking. Encouraging children to explore while setting appropriate limits helps to build the foundations of confidence, security and decision making that are so important in adult life.

ACTIVITY
to do with children

Bath time

Bath time is a perfect opportunity for exploration. If you have a child who loves the bath, great! If not, maybe this will make baths more fun for both of you. Let your child pick things he would like to explore while taking a bath.

Make sure they're tub-friendly. If he wants to put a cookie in the tub to see what happens, it's up to you! Include things that squirt, soak up, pour, float, sink, make noise (music), slide or stick when wet, etc. You can also use bubble bath, soap crayons, putty soap and other tub art materials.

Talk with your child about what might happen when he puts each object in the water and how he might use each object. Model exploration by touching, squeezing, looking, listening, asking questions and thinking out loud. Push a rubber duck under the water and say, "I wonder what will happen if I let go of this duck?" Let go of it and find out.

Try adapting this activity for different times and places, like the sandbox or the crib. Using the same objects several times helps your child to explore possibilities and develop prior knowledge.

TOPIC 46

Discovery

Definition

Discovery is finding out the results of behaviours and the answers to questions.

Examples

- An infant discovers that when he pushes the button on his crib toy, it squeaks.
- A toddler discovers that chocolate pudding tastes sweeter than potatoes.
- A 3-year-old discovers that she can use a stick to fish a toy out from under the couch.
- A child discovers that doing things in a certain sequence makes things easier, like putting on underwear on before jeans.
- A parent discovers that when a newborn is fussy, he is asking to be put to bed.

Key messages

- Children are natural discoverers.
- New information that is discovered is added to information that the child already knows.

About discovery

Children's natural need to explore, question and inquire results in new discoveries every day. The joy and satisfaction of discovery leads to new questions. Discovery reinforces children's desire to continue exploring and learning new things. Each thing children discover is linked to what they already know.

Think of discovery as a velcro ball. The more new information you stick to it, the bigger it gets. The bigger it gets, the easier it is to stick new information to it! If your child likes boats, each new kind of boat she discovers adds to her velcro ball of boats. The next time she discovers something new about boats, it will be easier to add it to her prior knowledge of the topic.

Children are willing to try and try again as long as they are encouraged and supported. Mistakes are just ways of discovering. Children often discover something totally unexpected when they are exploring. For example, a child might be trying to open a container and discover that it makes a nice hollow noise when he hits it. A drum! Children may play for hours with a single item. To an older preschooler, a broom can be a horse, an airplane, a magic wand, an oar... A child uses what looks to you like one object to expand knowledge of many topics.

How does discovery affect children's lifelong learning?

Children who are encouraged to discover their world become risk takers. They are able to examine things from different angles and see possibilities. Discovery is the reward for the hard work of exploring, inquiring, questioning and observing.

Discovery is both intentional and unintentional. As we get older, more of our discovery is intentional. In school, at home and in the workplace, we find answers to questions and solutions to problems through exploration, observation, inquiry and questioning. The end is different, but the means remain the same.

ACTIVITY to do with children

TV discovery

Most children spend at least some time watching TV. This activity will help you and your child find out how you can use TV for discovery.

Talk with your child about the kinds of programs she likes to watch. Together, make a simple chart that shows the type of program and how long your child spends watching it. You can include cartoons, educational, family or children's programming, and anything else you want. Record your child's TV watching habits on the chart for a week or two. Figure out how much time she spends watching each type of program.

We use only two senses watching TV – sight and hearing. Select several programs that your child likes and extend the learning to include the other three senses: smell, touch and taste. If you watch a cooking show together, try making something together in the kitchen? A program that shows children doing arts and crafts can usually be copied at home. If you're watching a show about tadpoles, see if you can find some in a nearby pond or go to a nature museum. You'll find it easier to enhance learning from some programs than from others. Is there a pattern?

TOPIC 47

Making Connections

Definition

Making connections is how we make sense of the world by linking pieces of information.

Examples

- An infant smiles at his father and the father smiles back.
- A toddler finds out that a pot can be used for cooking or for making music.
- A child begins to notice the patterns in language, adding "ed" to words when talking about the past, for example, "I swimmed in the pool."
- A child plays with a doll in the same way his parents play with him.
- You work out and eat nutritious foods because you've made the connection between these behaviours and a healthy body and lots of energy.
- When you think of Prince Edward Island, you think of Anne of Green Gables, red soil, potatoes and sandy beaches.

Key messages

- Children naturally make connections between objects, events, words, people and experiences.
- Children use a single object in different ways to learn about it and make connections to their prior knowledge.
- Pretend play is essential to making connections.

About making connections

We learn new things by gathering information through the senses and comparing it with what we already know. When children make a connection to something they already know, they are making sense of the world and combining information to create new ideas. Very early, children discover connections between different things, like a rubber ducky and the bathtub, crying and being picked up or different ways to use the same toy.

Making connections is often difficult for children because they have so little prior knowledge to use for comparison. That's why children often need to repeat the same thing many times. Children need lots of practice making connections. What might seem boring to you, like reading a favourite book over and over, helps children to make connections and "mental files" to hold new information.

Often, a child will use, watch, do or listen to a single thing over and over. It becomes a link to other things. A blanket starts off keeping the baby warm, then helps the toddler to feel secure, and later helps the preschooler gain independence when he decides it is no longer needed.

Adults who support and encourage exploration, inquiry, observation and questioning are helping children to make connections.

How does making connections affect children's lifelong learning?

From birth, children make sense of the world by seeing similarities and differences among people, events, objects, places, sounds and other experiences. Throughout life, thousands of pieces of information are recorded. For each task we do, we need to put these separate pieces of information together.

When children go to school, they constantly make connections between what they have already learned with hundreds of new experiences. When they make connections, they are transferring knowledge from one situation to another. This is how they create new ideas and ways of doing things, make plans and find solutions to problems.

ACTIVITY to do with children

The sandbox

The next time you're in the sandbox, watch your child playing. Let her direct the play, but join in as much as you can.

Playing with sand is a good way of making connections and creating new ideas. It can be used as a construction site, kitchen, town or city, science lab or artist's studio! Children use sand to make connections about shape, measurement, size, volume, proportion, texture, weight, colour, etc. Trying the same toy in different ways helps to build connections. A bucket can be used to carry or mould sand, it can be the base of a castle, a swimming pool in the castle courtyard or the drum played by the guard at the gate of the castle.

The sandbox is an empty canvas for you and your child to work with. You can use your imagination to come up with different ways to play with each toy and with the sand itself. The sand and toys can be whatever you want them to be.

Life Management

Life Management

The responsibility of meeting the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social needs of a child is a real life management issue. These topics provide you with some information and an opportunity to reflect on some important issues that relate to learning, such as eating, sleeping, stress, learning to use the toilet, relationships, self-esteem, child care, learning outside the home, television and behaviour

Eating

Christine Tripp

Eating and digestive patterns are unique to each child. Here are some guidelines:

- Babies cry or fuss when they are hungry or have digestive discomfort. They know when they're hungry and should be fed according to their own pattern.
- Children show preferences for different foods as they try new things. While their teeth are coming in, they enjoy foods that soothe their gums.
- Toddlers' appetites vary with the amount of energy they are using. They naturally want small amounts of food at various times of the day. Make sure your child gets enough fresh fruit, vegetables, grains, dairy products, protein and carbohydrates. Luckily, there are plenty of choices!
- Between 2 and 5 years old, children might change their eating patterns once in a while. They might go through a period of not wanting to eat at mealtimes or not liking

foods they liked in the past. If your child doesn't like a certain food, don't pressure her to eat it. You might have to offer a substitute to round out the meal.

Change in appetite?

Parents can think about their child's eating experiences each day and over a period of time to figure out what is causing the change or problem. Some things to consider include:

- being overtired
- a hectic mealtime
- a rushed schedule
- snacks too close to mealtime
- an upsetting event
- a health problem

Keep your approach positive. Encourage children to try new things and eat a balanced diet.

Mmmm...mealtime

For young children, positive mealtime experiences are an important part of building healthy lifetime eating habits. Regular meal times and the right amount of flavourful, interesting food will encourage them to eat.

Suggest that your children help set the table, serve themselves and scrape their own plate when they have finished. A relaxed, comfortable atmosphere with pleasant conversation will encourage children to participate.

The long-term goal is for your children to eat a balanced diet of nutritious foods and stay healthy.

Sleeping

ChristineTripp

Sleeping patterns become more regular as children grow older. A baby's sleep schedule is affected by eating patterns and the atmosphere of your home. After a while, your children will establish a routine of daytime naps and sleeping through the night. By 3 or 4 years old, most children need fewer total hours of sleep and will do well in a regular routine that suits their personal rhythm. A set bedtime is important. The amount of sleep a child needs depends on metabolism, personality, the amount of energy she uses and how much fresh air she gets.

Just relax...

Sometimes, bedtime seems like a real power struggle. Two-year-olds are exerting their own will, 3-year-olds test the limits of your patience by getting out of bed, and a 4- or 5-year-old might announce that he simply is not tired. You can help your child with the transition to bedtime by relaxing him and making it a pleasant experience.

Having a bath, picking out clothes for tomorrow, tidying up, reading a story together, listening to soft music, having a quiet talk and cuddling with a soft toy (or with you) all help children to relax and get ready for bed. A backrub or a hug and kiss can also be a consistent and secure signal that it's time to relax and go to sleep. Remember – your child needs to relax and unwind just like you do at the end of a long day!

Scared?

At about 3 years old, children develop a very vivid imagination that can keep them awake at night. Here are some things that might help:

- Help your child to understand what is real and what is imaginary by reading books together about a child who has nightmares or is afraid of the monsters under the bed. You might even want to do a "monster check" together before bedtime.
- Your child might want to crawl into bed with you when he's scared. You will need to decide if this is okay for you and strike a balance between offering comfort to your child and making sure that you both get a good night's sleep.
- A night light can help if your child is afraid of the dark.

Relationships

Christine Tapp

A child's relationships can be with parents, sisters and brothers, extended family members, friends, teachers, health care workers, caregivers and classmates. The relationships we have with other people are physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources. Children have a right to relationships. When children relate to many different people, they learn important social skills, for example, how to make friends and how to get along with others. It helps them to know that they are special and worth knowing.

Do you have a large extended family, with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins? Do your children go to child care or a playgroup? Do you or your partner stay home with your children during the day? Do your children spend time with your adult friends and with others their own age? What do you think are the most important relationships in your children's life? The opportunities your child has to build relationships depend on your family's lifestyle.

Communicate! Some tips for active listening

Clear communication and lots of it is the most useful tool in building a close relationship with your children. Adults must be "active listeners," paying close attention to children's words, sounds, behaviour and body language. Here are some tips:

- Use words like "I hear you saying that you are sad because... Can you tell me more?" This lets your child know that you heard her. It gives her an opportunity to correct you if you didn't quite understand. It encourages her to express her own point of view.
- Use I-messages, like "I'm afraid when you climb the fence that you are going to fall and get hurt." This way, you can voice your concerns about your child's behaviour as well as your feelings about him. Children need to know that you still love them even when they are doing something you don't like.
- Children who feel acceptance and trust are more likely to express themselves openly. They feel safe knowing that you love them no matter what.

Mine!

Sharing is hard when you don't understand that you're not losing something. Very young children tend to be concerned mostly with themselves until they have more experience learning social skills and building relationships. A 2-year-old is usually more interested in "me" than in other children. By the age of 3, spending time with others helps children to learn the skills of sharing, cooperation, planning, working together and being creative.

What does play have to do with relationships?

When children role play and pretend, they learn about daily life and relationships. A child who plays with a doll may be pretending to care for a baby sister or brother. A child who stuffs a large purse with paper and pretends to be Mom leaving for work with a briefcase comes closer to an understanding of what Mom's life is like and what possibilities life holds. Children explore relationships through play, finding answers to puzzling questions and easing fears. Often, when children are upset about something, they will process the problem by acting it out or pretending.

Adult clothes, hats, shoes, phones, child-sized furniture and kitchen appliances and other props encourage imaginary and pretend play. Children play roles that they know about, for example, Mom, Dad, teacher, doctor, nurse, hairdresser and crossing guard.

Learning Outside the Home

ChristinaTripp

People are learning every waking moment. We are constantly learning from people, places and things. Often, we don't realize we are learning. We begin learning at birth in a natural way through observing, exploring, inquiring and discovering. Many things are learned by "osmosis."

Remembering what we learn is a complex process (see Ways of Remembering — Module Two). We can't always recall how we learned certain things, but learning has taken place. For example, most people have learned about safety around fire. We probably can't remember how we learned because we picked up this important learning in bits and pieces, from many different sources and at different times.

We all have experiences in which things that took place in our lives years ago are suddenly remembered because of some sensory stimulus – the smell of bread, the sound of a horn, the sight of a dog. Have you ever been asked if you have seen a particular movie as a child? Do you remember it?" Chances are you'll say "No." However, watch that old movie again on TV for a few minutes and you'll remember lots about it. What do you recall when you return to your elementary school for a visit?

Researchers debate how much of our experience we store as learning. However, in ways we are only beginning to understand, our magnificent brain collects, makes sense of and stores countless life experiences and learning.

Prior to formal learning at school, children's world is their school where they come into contact with thousands of things for the first time. First experiences with anything are often most powerful and usually the best remembered. This is particularly true of young children.

Young children can't help but learn. Their brains are wired to be particularly sensitive to taking in information and using it to make sense of their world. So, treat each day of a child's life as a day of learning – learning that will last a lifetime.

Here are some places, people and situations that influence children's learning:

Extended family – grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins

Neighbourhood – recreation facilities, family resource centres, the environment

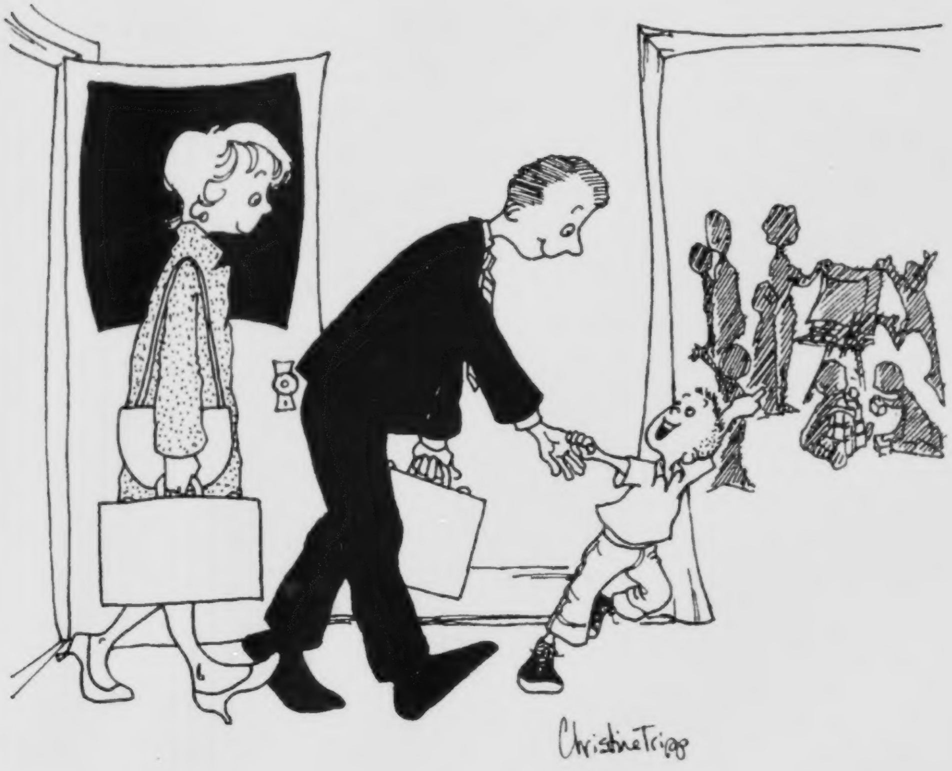
Friends – other children, adult friends, new people

Lifestyle – culture and religion, financial resources, housing

Child care – teachers and caregivers, other children, child care programs

Outings – parks and nature, trips, daily activities, museums, zoos

Child Care



Families come in many different shapes and sizes. They can have one or two parents, parents of the same sex or extended family members living in the home. One thing many families have in common is that parents work outside the home. In some cases, an extended family member like a grandparent, aunt or uncle can care for children while parents study or are at work. Often, children go outside the home for child care. Some examples are family child care, centre-based care and preschool programs.

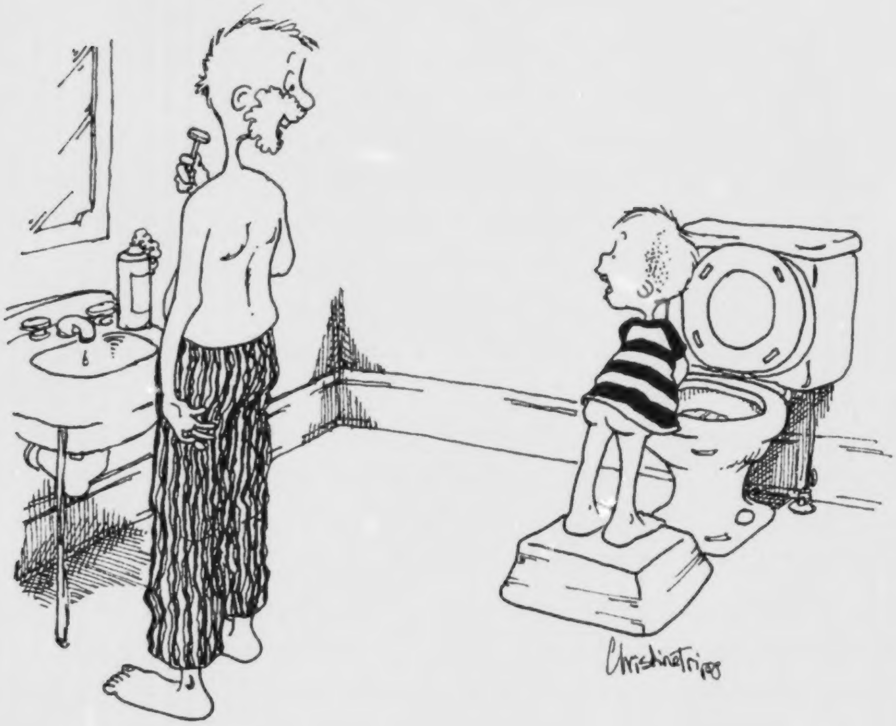
When you're choosing child care, there are lots of things to think about:

- Does the program encourage children to explore, manipulate, express themselves, be creative and have fun?
- Do the staff interact with the children in a nurturing and supportive way?
- Is the place appealing for young children, with child-sized furniture and equipment, plenty of windows, an indoor playroom and outside play area, and a safe and healthy atmosphere?

- Is the program culturally appropriate? Does it reflect a multicultural perspective?
- If your child has special needs, is the setting suitable for her growth and development?

You can visit different places before making your decision. You'll want to stay with your child at first, until you both feel comfortable separating. This might take a few days. Parents will get more information and children can get used to the teachers or caregivers and other children. Choosing child care is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make, so take your time. Child care outside the home helps children to learn social skills, make friends, get ready for the transition to school and prepare for life. It should provide a safe and nurturing environment where young children can explore and learn about their world.

Learning to Use the Toilet



This is a tough one for many parents and children. Toileting is different for each child, but the most important factor is readiness:

- Is your child physically able to control his bowels and bladder?
- Is he able to understand what is expected of him?
- Has he shown an interest in learning to use the potty or toilet?

Sometimes, learning to use the toilet is an unrealistic expectation. If a child feels pressure to use the toilet before he is ready, he might learn to be defiant or sneaky.

Until age 3, toileting should be left entirely up to your child. Some children will choose to use the toilet earlier than others and practically train themselves. Others might not show the slightest interest.

At about age 3, children will usually be curious and interested in watching others use the toilet. They might change diapers on dolls, pull their own diapers up and down, or sit on a potty. They can also learn to wash their own hands.

While learning, it is normal for a child to have ups and downs and some days will be more successful than others. Learning to use the toilet is not about "good" and "bad" behaviour. The best results will come from consistent support and encouragement.

Stress

Christine Tripp

When children experience stress, you can see it in their body language, notice it in their behaviour and hear it in their words. Sometimes it comes from within – feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem, anger or fear. Stress can also come from hectic schedules, unreasonable demands and unrealistic expectations. The things that cause stress for young children are very similar to the things that cause stress for adults:

- a major change in routine, like new child care arrangements or moving to a new house
- change in family situation, like a divorce, marriage, new baby or the death of a grandparent
- pressure to achieve a goal that the child is not ready for, like toilet training or giving up a soother
- feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem, anger and fear can come from a variety of sources – neglect, lack of consistent guidelines or a traumatic event.

Children who seem stressed need the individual, focused attention of their parents. They need affection, comfort, soothing words and conversation on a regular basis to prevent stress from affecting their health and development.

Keeping things consistent in all areas of a child's life is the best way to reduce stress. Consistent routines, clear limits and guidance are important. Unconditional love and affection go a long way in easing everyday stress.

It's normal for all of us to be stressed some of the time. If your child is stressed, it doesn't mean you aren't doing a good job as a parent. Often, we don't have as much control over our lives as we would like. Do the best you can to keep the pressure off by consistently supporting, encouraging and loving your child just the way she is. Helping your child to cope with stress now will build the foundation for healthy coping skills later.

Self-Esteem

ChristineTripp

Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves. It is having a sense of self-respect and self-worth. It is whether or not we like ourselves and feel accepted by others.

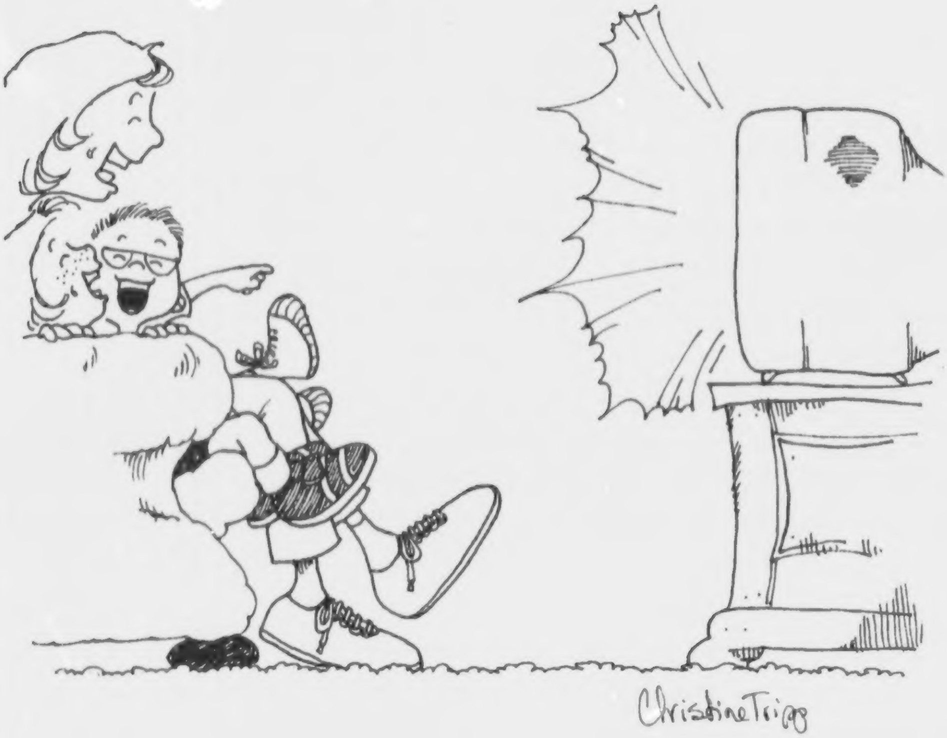
Self-esteem isn't about how many friends a child has or what kind of clothes her parents can afford to buy. Good self-esteem comes from feelings of success and competence. When we can do something well, we feel good. Allowing your child to make some of her own choices builds confidence and a sense of accomplishment. You can help by offering specific feedback like, "I really like the way you used the colours in that picture – how did you do that?" or "These cookies you made taste great – how did you make them so chewy?"

Good self-esteem is something we all want for our children. It is the key ingredient to a child's confidence, sense of purpose, ability to form healthy relationships with others, involvement in the community, and success in school and work. Self-esteem influences the decisions children make throughout life, like choosing friends, being motivated, being a leader or a follower, and setting and reaching goals.

How do children get positive self-esteem?

When children learn in infancy that the people in their world will care for, comfort, feed, protect and nurture them, the foundation for positive self-esteem is laid. When children are talked to, touched gently, soothed when they are upset, fed when they are hungry and kept warm and dry, they feel loved. From the beginning, parents can send caring messages in words and actions that lay the foundation for positive self-esteem.

Television



Television is a reality of everyday life. Even if we feel strongly about limiting TV viewing, every child is exposed to at least some TV. Sometimes plunking a child in front of the TV seems like the only way to get through an especially busy time of day.

There are lots of good things on TV. Many educational and children's programs are interesting and fun. There are also lots of other things on TV – soap operas, sitcoms, news, movies and adult dramas. It's essential to keep an eye on what your child is watching.

Watch with your child and talk together about what's on. Extend the learning to real life. Try cooking together after you watch a cooking show or find out more about dolphins after watching a show about them.

Advertising targets children. Countless ads for toys, games and movies vie for children's attention, and parents' money. Teach your child to think critically about advertising by pointing out some of the techniques advertisers use. For example, toys are often made to look better than they really are – reading the fine print shows that "horse's legs do not really move" or "car cannot really jump a 3-foot ravine."

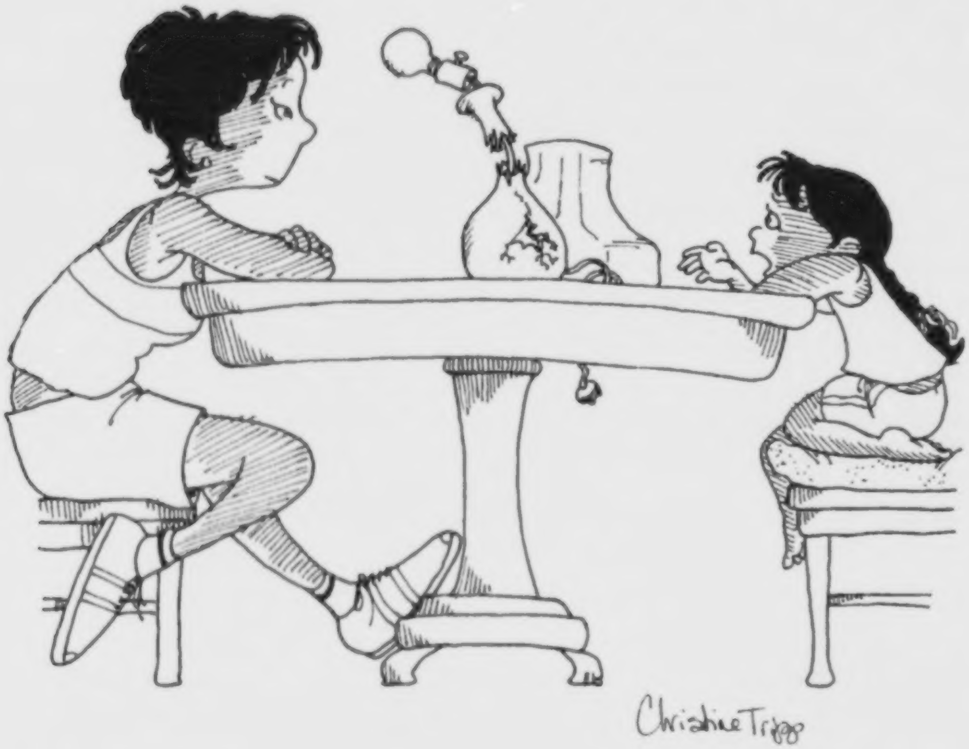
You can also ask questions, for example, "Why do they only show boys playing with those cars?" and "Why do they make the parents look so silly in that ad?" When your child is "armed" with information, he can figure out what is real and what is pretend on TV.

Tips for guiding TV viewing

- Decide how much TV your children are allowed to watch on weekdays and on weekends.
- Be clear about which times and what programs children are allowed to watch.
- Don't let TV time be saved up.
- Establish rules about tidying up, having a nap, reading, etc., before watching TV.
- Remind children that the TV is only a machine. When a show is too scary or unbelievable, they should turn it off.
- Find out what your child's thoughts and feelings are after a program is over.
- Be flexible about allowing your child to watch "specials" – these might have to be worked into the weekly TV time.
- Watch for children getting hooked by soap operas or serialized programs.
- Children get bored. Sometimes they turn on the TV because they have nothing else to do. Offer alternatives like books, games, crafts, art, playing outside and anything else you can think of!

Hint: Some of these tips are good for computer time, too!

Behaviour Guidance



Guiding your child's behaviour is a way of loving your child. A child who has clear guidelines feels secure, loved and safe to explore and learn. When you set a limit about playing near the street or eating cookies before supper, you are caring for your child.

Often, effective guidance or discipline is one of the most difficult things about parenting. Each child is different and will need limits set to suit his personality.

Some children respond well when you just explain a guideline. Others might also need to be shown an alternative or be redirected.

When you set reasonable limits for your child, she will eventually learn to set her own limits and make good choices.

A close and trusting relationship with your child makes discipline much easier for both of you. Your role is to provide loving guidance by explaining why a rule is in place, setting consistent limits, providing alternatives to a problem behaviour and setting a good example.

Most parents learn to be parents by trial and error. You don't learn to be a parent in school, and the greatest influence on your parenting style is usually your own parents – how you were brought up yourself.

When you have a family of your own, your notions of guidance might clash with your spouse or partner's. You compromise and come up with a system of guidance that works in your family. This system will probably grow and change over the years and with each child.

Over the past few decades, how people discipline their children has changed. Most people no longer use physical punishment. A more democratic style of parenting is common and most parents feel that clear communication and using alternatives are very effective.

Children need to know that you love them even if you don't like something they have done or said.

Parenting styles

There are three basic parenting styles:

Authoritarian – "I'm the boss"
An authoritarian parent will demand obedience and make decisions on behalf of the child. This parent will not welcome input or be flexible. The message to the child is "Do it now or else." The child will probably grow up either not wanting to make decisions, being submissive to others, or being defiant and rebellious against authority.

Permissive – "You're on your own"
A permissive parent allows the child to make all her own decisions and learn by the consequences of her behaviour. This parent provides little or no guidance. The message to the child is that she has the right to do as she pleases. The child is likely to feel she has the right to make all her own decisions and might make several unwise choices before learning "the hard way." She might eventually avoid making any decisions at all.

Authoritative – "We're in this together"
An authoritative parent falls between the first two. This parent encourages the child to make his own decisions, but provides some information to help the child make that decision — for example, "If you choose to do it this way, these are the possible results..." The child will feel motivated to make choices and will learn to take responsibility for his actions. When children feel a positive sense of self-esteem and have loving guidance, they are more likely to experience the world as a good place to be, with lots of opportunities for success and learning. This is the basis for emotional and social well-being.

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Notes

Canadian Child Care Federation
Suite 201, 383 Parkdale Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4R4
Phone: (613) 729-5289; 1 800 858-1412
Fax: (613) 729-3159; Email: cccf@sympatico.ca
www.cfc-efc.ca/cccf

Early Learning Canada

PARTICIPANT RESOURCE

LEARNING & READING PARTNERS ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

Early Learning Canada
Participant Resource

ISBN # 0-9685157-3-8

Early Learning Canada is a community workshop program designed for parents and adults who work with young children from birth to age 6 and their families. Its purpose is to facilitate lifelong learning. The program was developed during a 30-month project that began in October 1998; resources include a Participant Resource, a Workshop Leader Guide and a Train-the-Trainer Manual. During the project, 150 workshop leaders worked in pairs to deliver workshops in communities across Canada.

Partnering Organizations / Project Steering Committee:
Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs / Alla Ivask
Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists / Suzanne Fraser
Canadian Child Care Federation / Dianne Bascombe, Barbara Coyle (chair)
Learning Disabilities Association of Canada / Pauline Mantha
Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System / Maitland MacIsaac

CCCF Project Management Team:
Barbara Coyle, Xania Gordon, Robin Kealey

Authors:
Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System
Nancy Estey, Maitland MacIsaac, Sandra Rendell

Illustrator:
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Design:
Fairmont House Design

Editing:
Karin Lynch, Judith Whitehead

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Advisors
Beth Allan
Heather Brown
Elaine Cairns
Kim Crockatt
Sharon Fotheringham
Mary Gallagher
Ann Gauvin
Chris Gay
Anne Joyce
Barbara Kaiser
Beverley Kirby
Linda Mace
Heather MacKenzie
Laureen Mackenzie
Elizabeth Mann
Cathy McCormack
Sue McCormack
Claire McNab
Keith Morgan
Trudy Norton
Marg Rodrigues
Mona Rowland
Janet Shively
Carolyn Simpson
Alice Taylor
Marilyn Goodyear Whiteley

Pilot Workshop Leaders
Joanne Boyd
Doreen Cowin
Lise Beauchemin-Crousette
Andrea Gingras
Robin Kealey
Vicki Laframboise
Caroline Landry
Karen Luker
Cathy McCormack
Anne Ricard
Brenda Rioux
Linda Mace

Prince Edward Island Literacy Alliance
Erin Casey
Dianne Morrow
Catherine O'Bryan

The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policy of any of the funders.

The authors acknowledge that the Experiencing Learning Cycle evolved from the work of Dewey (1938), Kolb (1984) and Kennedy (1994).

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Contents

This resource is for anyone who works with and cares for young children. The word "parent" is inclusive of all those who contribute to the development and lifelong learning of children.

Introduction **3**

Module One – Understanding Learning **5**
Topic 1: PAT 7
Topic 2: TALK 10
Topic 3: Multisensory Learning 13
Topic 4: Role of Play in Learning 15
Topic 5: Learning Goals vs. Performance Goals 17

Module Two – More About Understanding Learning **21**
Topic 6: Multiple Intelligences 23
Topic 7: Motivation 27
Topic 8: Ways of Remembering 30
Topic 9: Learning Styles 33
Topic 10: Developmental Stages of Learning 35

Module Three – Process of Thinking **39**
Topic 11: Observe 41
Topic 12: Compare and Contrast 43
Topic 13: Pattern 45
Topic 14: Predict 47
Topic 15: Main Idea 49
Topic 16: Understanding Pictures 51
Topic 17: Real and Pretend 53

Module Four – More About Process of Thinking **55**
Topic 18: Label 57
Topic 19: Categorize 59
Topic 20: Cause and Effect 61
Topic 21: Sequence 63
Topic 22: Prioritize 65
Topic 23: Fact and Opinion 67
Topic 24: Making Decisions 69

Module Five – Language Development 71
Topic 25: Communication 73
Topic 26: Important Factors 75
Topic 27: How Language Develops 79
Topic 28: Parents' Role in Language Development 83
Topic 29: Connecting with Children 87

Module Six – More About Language Development 91
Topic 30: Early Listening and Speaking 93
Topic 31: Early Reading 96
Topic 32: Early Writing 99
Topic 33: Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development 103

Module Seven – Health and Learning 107
Topic 34: Health Resources 109
Topic 35: Health Influencers 112
Topic 36: Health Populations 115
Topic 37: Values 117
Topic 38: Health Strategies 120

Module Eight – A Framework for Learning 123
Factors that affect learning 125
Topic 39: Physical Factors 125
Topic 40: Environmental Factors 128
Topic 41: Social Factors 130
Topic 42: Emotional Factors 132
Topic 43: Neurological Factors 135
Understanding the world 138
Topic 44: Inquiry 138
Topic 45: Exploration 140
Topic 46: Discovery 142
Topic 47: Making Connections 144

Life Management 147
Eating 149
Sleeping 151
Relationships 153
Learning Outside the Home 155
Child Care 157
Learning to Use the Toilet 159
Stress 161
Self-Esteem 163
Television 165
Behaviour Guidance 167

Reading List 169
Notes 171

Introduction to Early Learning Canada

One hundred years from now let us be remembered, not so much for our advances in technology, but rather, that in the last years of the 20th century, we made decisions to treasure the mind of every young child.

— Maitland MacIsaac, Executive Director
Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System, May 1999

Early Learning Canada is based on the understanding that the capacity to learn is optimized in the early years of life. The brain is constantly searching for meaning, experiences, ways to relate to and understand the world.

To do this most effectively requires interaction with others – both children and adults. All society has a responsibility to practise the African proverb "It takes a whole village to raise a child." One way is for the community to have programs available that give them information and strategies to assist children to become successful lifelong learners. Early Learning Canada is such a program.

Early Learning Canada is based on the following principles:

- Parents have an essential role in their children's lifelong learning.
- Parents are the primary educators of their young children.
- Parents have the capacity to educate their young children.
- Parents are not alone as their children's primary teacher, because the whole community has responsibilities for raising children.

Upon completing Early Learning Canada, participants will:

- understand how children "learn how to learn"
- have strategies to help children become effective thinkers
- have strategies to help children develop their language
- have a framework for learning that links early learning and learning for life
- have strategies to interact with children to maximize learning.

Early Learning Canada is designed to be:

- for ALL parents and those who have a role in the lives of young children
- fun for children, parents and others who interact with children
- informative and easy to follow
- a time to share with others about young children's learning
- a chance to open doors to possibilities for young children's learning.

After completing Early Learning Canada, you'll be more empowered to help children learn for life.

MODULE ONE

Understanding Learning

ChristineTrias

Introduction

While every child is an individual, children also have many similarities in what they need to grow and thrive. The information and activities in the **Understanding Learning** module are designed to provide you with the "big picture" of how all children learn and what you can do to enhance your own child's learning.

This section demonstrates how young children learn best and provides you with an easy-to-remember model of your essential role in encouraging and enhancing your child's eagerness to learn.

Understanding how your child learns will allow you to see the world through your child's eyes, and you will be alert to the endless learning opportunities you can provide through everyday activities.

Understanding Learning Topics

Topic 1: PAT
Topic 2: TALK
Topic 3: Multisensory Learning
Topic 4: Role of Play in Learning
Topic 5: Learning Goals vs. Performance Goals

TOPIC 1

PAT: Provide, Allow, Teach

Definition

PAT stands for the role that parents have in helping children to learn.

P *Provide* opportunities for children to learn.

A *Allow* children to lead by letting the learning happen naturally.

T *Teach* by modelling and direct instruction.

Example

- Provide a basin of water and a variety of objects such as a rubber ball, a straw, cups and bowls.
- Allow the child to pour and play, to blow bubbles, to explore, to discover.
- Teach by sharing the child's excitement about his explorations. Talk with him and give him the words he needs for the concepts he has discovered – "The ball floats." "The spoon sinks." "Bubbles are made of air."

Key messages

- PAT is an easy-to-remember tool for helping young children with learning.
- PAT gives you an understanding of how young children learn best.

About PAT

We often interact with our children in the same way that we were taught. While there are exceptions, we generally assume that helping children learn means doing what we remember our parents and teachers doing. But early childhood is a time for a special kind of learning. It is a time of first experiences and learning how to make connections.

Much of the time, our role is not to instruct but to provide opportunities for children to do what comes naturally – learn on their own. Of course, there are times when we must actively teach. Think of the many things – from tying shoes to learning about poison ivy – that children have difficulty "discovering" on their own.

How does PAT affect children's lifelong learning?

By following PAT, you help children acquire many kinds of knowledge that will be the foundations of their future learning. You are encouraging a love of learning and a positive attitude. And you are providing children with a process and a model for future independent learning.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

P – Provide learning opportunities
Something as simple as a trip to a store can provide a stimulating learning environment. When you think of play for yourself, you may think of meeting a friend for coffee, playing cards or sitting in the park. But, when children "play," they are learning. Playing and interacting with children helps them to learn, and learn how to learn. Take advantage of opportunities. When a child hands you a leaf, extend the learning by making the leaf a starting point to explore colour, shape, texture and imagination.

A – Allow the child to lead the learning
Young children are explorers. They like to choose their own areas to explore. Young children may also have short attention spans. They probably like to spend a short time on one thing and then move on to something else. Often, children have no interest in learning what adults want them to learn.

Remember that children are learning all the time. Usually, it's not learning specific things that's important – it's learning how to learn about all things. Watch children as they learn.

T – Teach the child directly and by modelling
Children learn so much from the adults around them. They learn about relationships, behaviour, people, places and things. Children watch adults' behaviour and imitate them. Children also learn when adults teach them directly. Most of the time, learning takes place through modelling. A child watches mom, dad or big brother put on socks, talk to others, use a tool, read, watch TV, smile, raise their voice. In each and every case, the adult is modelling what to do in different situations – and often does not know how powerful this unconscious modelling is. Children use parents and other important people as their filter to understand the world and their place in it.

Here are a few ways to use PAT.

Provide

You are a wonderful resource for your child. Often, a hug or a sit on your lap starts a conversation.

There are many simple things that will delight and inspire your child to explore and create. Sand and water are always fun, old socks make great puppets, cardboard boxes can become trains or tractors. Water play is the best free fun going. Give your child some things that float, sink or dissolve, some bubble bath, funnels, cups or straws and you have a science lab in your bathroom!

Doing something as simple as inviting a small friend to your home provides your child with the opportunity to play, develop language, learn social skills and develop self-esteem.

Allow

Let your child try, try and try again. We don't learn how to do most things on the first try. It's a process of trial and error.

Letting your children do things for themselves will make their learning easier. When you do things for children that they could be learning to do for themselves, you take away the opportunity for them to take risks, learn how to do things and develop competency. However, common sense has to be the order of the day. If your child is ever frustrated or in a dangerous situation, step in and offer guidance.

Allowing your child to be the learning leader encourages her to connect with people. Young children don't need a continuous adult presence. They benefit from a lot of short spurts. Each spurt is a connection that builds self-confidence and a feeling of self-worth.

We know that time is precious and sometimes you may feel you have to "do something" with your child. Actually, your job is mostly to let your child tell you how she wants to learn. Let her take the lead and go with the flow!

Teach

Children often give you chances to extend learning. When a child points and says "Bird!" you can stretch the learning by adding more words: "The bird is flying." Children ask tons of questions. It's their job. They are researching the world and you are the encyclopedia. It's tough to be mom or dad when you're busy with other things. It's important, however, to take a deep breath and answer those questions.

TOPIC 2

TALK: Thinking, Attitude, Language and Knowledge

Definition

Thinking, attitude, language and knowledge are the four essential learning processes people use to understand the world.

T hinking
A ttitude
L anguage
K nowledge

Examples

If you want to put together a piece of unfinished furniture like a crib, you need to:

T *Think* (understand the picture or diagram to see how the finished crib will look, categorize and label the pieces (legs, screws, brackets), compare the pieces with the diagram, follow a sequence to put the pieces together, and decide if you are satisfied with the finished crib).

A Have a positive *attitude* (even if the assembly is difficult).

L Use *language* (to read the directions, to listen and speak with someone helping you).

K Use *knowledge* (what you already know) about cribs, using tools and following instructions.

Key messages

Learning is the constant interaction of the four processes. All learning and problem solving depends on TALK.

Thinking: People use critical and creative thinking strategies as they learn.

Attitude: Attitudes about learning and the values people place on particular knowledge affects how they learn.

Language: We need language to:
- communicate
- think
- acquire knowledge

Knowledge: When we learn, we use our prior knowledge to understand new knowledge.

Using these learning processes as you work and play with children will help them to be better learners.

About TALK

The more we know about and use TALK, the more effectively we can learn.

Thinking

Being more aware of our thinking makes us better learners and decision makers.

Attitude

What a difference our attitude makes when we have an opportunity to learn! When we are positive and motivated, we are more successful. If we feel negative, we may not even begin.

Language

We use language to communicate. We use language in four ways: listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Knowledge

Have you ever tried to describe an object to a friend who has never seen it before? You'll likely compare this object to something your friend already knows about – you use your friend's prior knowledge.

Young children are discovering how to learn. They have to figure out what thinking, attitude, language and knowledge are all about. They learn how to use each one, and put them together. They need to make mistakes, communicate messages, understand themselves, learn how to walk, learn how to act – all from scratch! Quite a job for the first years of life.

Children learn most of the skills and strategies that relate to TALK before they are about 6 years of age. This is why those who work with young children need to provide an environment where the fundamental learning processes used throughout life can be learned. What you do with a child during the early years sets the course for life.

How does TALK affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5

The preschool years are the time when the "grand rivers of the mind" are forming. Thinking, attitude, language and knowledge are constantly fed from the streams of experience. The grand learning rivers supply what your child needs to learn, to transfer knowledge from place to place, and to create new ideas.

The school years: 6 – 12

The child is now a trained explorer with the equipment and maps needed to discover new people, places and things. The mind is keen to use all those new learning skills. It's time to venture outside the home to learn more about the bigger world.

Adolescence: 13 – 18

During the teen years, the rivers change course. Now, the goal is for teens to discover themselves and others. Young people are learning to manage interpersonal and close relationships outside the family. The social focus shifts from family to friends.

Adulthood

Throughout life, adults use thinking, attitude, language and prior knowledge to understand new knowledge.

ACTIVITY for parents

TALK

You are visiting a friend and your 2-year-old starts to explore the living room. You closely watch your child. You begin to *think*, "I wonder what's going to happen." But your friend says, "Don't worry." You know her well. You decide to sit back and have a relaxed *attitude*, too. You then start chatting about children, using *language* to share a newspaper article about child behaviour and what it's like to care for a 2-year-old. She shares some of her experiences when she was employed as a child care provider. You both share your prior *knowledge*.

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TOPIC 3

Multisensory Learning

Definition

Multisensory learning uses all the senses of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste to help with learning.

Examples

- If we want to learn about a dairy farm, the best way is to visit one and *see* the cows and the milking machines, *hear* the cows mooing and the sounds of the machinery, *smell* the hay and the manure, *touch* the cows and the hay, and *taste* the processed milk products (pasteurized milk, cheese, yogurt).
- If we want to learn about flowers, the best way is to see, smell and touch them.
- If we want to know about water, we look at it, splash it, pour it, drink it, and maybe even swim in it.

Key messages

- It is important to provide young learners with opportunities for multisensory experiences.
- The more senses we use, the better we learn.

About multisensory learning

Everything we know is learned by using our five senses. During the first 5 years, a lot of what children experience is new. A child will touch a cat, see a flower, smell a skunk, and hear a fire truck – all for the first time. These sensory experiences become prior knowledge that helps a child to learn even more new things.

The more senses we use, the easier it is to remember things. Our brains are wired to learn through sensory experiences. Second-hand learning, for example through TV, does not substitute for the real thing.

The more senses we use, the greater the learning. We have become more dependent on sight and hearing because of print, radio and TV. Much of daily life involves reading and hearing. In schools, subjects like science and social studies are often learned by reading a book, not by experiencing the real thing. Reading or hearing about experiences is usually not as efficient a way to learn as being involved in the experience. People often remember a great deal more of what they experience (Jensen, 1996).

The message is clear. Children who participate in a variety of experiences using all their senses are getting a head start in lifelong learning.

How does multisensory learning affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5
Children pick up all the sights, sounds, smells, touches and tastes they can, getting as much information as possible every waking moment.

The school years: 6 – 12
The brain takes the zillions of things learned in the first 5 years and begins to use them in abstract ways. If children have had lots of multisensory experiences, they will have first-hand knowledge about many things in the world. They can now use this prior knowledge to understand and make connections by reading about things. However, what they understand when reading depends very much on what they have already experienced about the subject.

Adolescence: 13 – 18
Multisensory experiences take on new meaning as teens become focused on peers. Relationships are the focus of an adolescent's life.

Adulthood
Humans are designed to learn experientially, but adults can also think in abstract terms. They can read books, hear conversations, use computers. However, most things learned in the mind are rooted in the senses. Much of the new knowledge about the world comes through the senses.

ACTIVITIES for parents

Trying a new fruit or vegetable

Go to a store and choose a fruit or vegetable you've never eaten before. Take it home and examine it, using all your senses. Think of some words that describe how it looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes. For example, the fruit may be soft, squishy, pebbly, hard or fuzzy. Ask someone to share the experience with you. You might feel a bit silly, but you'll learn things about how children process their world and about how you process yours.

I've got a funny feeling

Put an object in a "feely" bag. Have a child put her hand into the bag and try to identify the object by touch alone.

Try testing "sight" by showing a picture of part of an object and asking a friend to figure out what it is. See how hard it can be to get information when we are limited to only one sense.

What does food sound like?

List the five senses. When you make your next meal, put a check beside the senses you use as you cook. Did you use them all? Would you still be able to make the meal if you couldn't use one of your senses? Which one do you think you could most easily do without?

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TOPIC 4

Role of Play in Learning

Definition

Play has many different meanings. Here, it is defined as learning through pleasurable activities.

Example

- An infant plays with his toes.
- A child feeds her doll and burps it.
- An older child plays school with a little brother.
- A 5-year-old helps with household chores, cooking and other grown-up activities.

Key messages

- Although many adults tend to think of play as "wasting time," play is essential to a young child's learning.
- We are motivated to do what we enjoy and we learn most effectively when we are doing what we enjoy.

About play

There are many forms of play. Anything we choose to do because it gives us pleasure can be considered play. This varies from person to person. For some people, bungee jumping is great fun – some of us couldn't even watch! Some people play hockey for fun, some read a book, while others watch TV, paint, sew, garden or play games.

Various types of play satisfy our needs to have fun, be free (from work and daily worries), belong (to a team or partner) and have control (accomplishment and mastery of a skill). Our own personal interests determine what is fun for each of us. If we are interested, we are motivated to learn about that topic.

Have you noticed how much people learn about their chosen hobby or sport? Think of people who garden. They know about plants, soil conditions, planting times, watering and fertilizing. In the process of doing what they enjoy, they become experts. Similarly, skiers or snowboarders develop an expert knowledge of snow conditions, safety, spatial and body awareness. All this learning happens while the person is playing.

Children **must** play to learn. Through play, children try out new roles and ways of acting, learn and practise new skills and processes, and internalize new experiences and ways of feeling. Children might learn to dress themselves by dressing a doll. Young children are totally involved in their world of play. When children are fully engaged and concentrating on a play activity, the greatest, easiest and most intense learning takes place.

How does play affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5
Babies play with their fingers and toes, with crib toys, etc. Toddlers play in their own world: even with other children, their play is often "parallel" or side by side, rather than with each other.

The school years: 6 – 12
School-age children play in groups. They begin to play games with rules. Play becomes a way of interacting with others and learning important social skills.

Adolescence: 13 – 18
Many of an adolescent's "play" activities involve both physical and social skills. Adolescents also play at adult relationships. Issues of peer group acceptance are the serious business of play. Sometimes, teens seem so serious that you might think they have lost interest in playing, but their play has just changed to include experimenting with adult roles and activities.

Adulthood
Adults tend to view play as an escape from routine, a way to relax and "de-stress" from the world. Important learning often takes place as they pursue their interests.

ACTIVITY for parents

Grown-up play

Think about your own favourite way to "play." Is it gardening, dancing, listening to music, playing or watching a sport? List the knowledge, skills and experience that you have gained from playing in this way. Is your favourite play activity something you do alone or with others? Some play is social, some is solitary. We learn from both.

Now think about your child. How does he relax or have fun? Does he like to have his friends over, play in the tub or build with blocks?

TOPIC 5

Learning Goals vs. Performance Goals

Definition

- A learning goal focuses on the **process** of acquiring or learning a skill.
- A performance goal focuses on the **product** of acquiring or learning a skill.

Examples

- You want to improve your back stroke. You must learn to move your arms and legs more efficiently. That's a learning goal.
- You want to swim 30 laps of the pool in 20 minutes. That's a performance goal.
- You want to cook healthier meals. You need to know the principles of nutrition. That's a learning goal.
- You master the concepts in your textbook so you can pass your chemistry exam. That's a performance goal.

Key messages

- There is a difference between learning and performance goals.
- We sometimes set performance goals for ourselves or for our children that interfere with learning.

About learning goals vs. performance goals

We want our children to be the best they can be. We may feel that a child's performance reflects on us. Sometimes, this leads to unrealistic expectations. When a child has trouble learning, she may not be developmentally ready – physically or intellectually. By focusing on learning goals instead of performance goals, you help children gain self-esteem.

When you were a child, did your parents ever say to you, "We want to see an 'A' in math on the next report card?" Have you ever said to yourself, "I will lose 10 pounds by next month?" Those are performance goals. The emphasis is on the result, not on how to get there or what you can learn along the way. The only measure of success is achieving the goal. The child who feels he must earn an "A" might memorize facts instead of trying to understand concepts.

This doesn't mean we shouldn't try to improve ourselves or achieve our goals. But focusing on a learning goal often helps us do this even more successfully.

Instead of insisting on an "A" in reading and writing, we can guide children on a language journey by reading together, talking about books, sharing experiences, writing about them, and playing word games. Your child has a better chance of getting that "A" in reading and writing for life, and will truly enjoy the experience of these activities for himself.

A child who is faced with unrealistic expectations may become a perfectionist and be dissatisfied with himself if he can't live up to performance goals. He may believe he must be "perfect" or "best." He may have a real fear of failure and be afraid to take any kind of learning risk. Knowing he can't be perfect in an unfamiliar situation, he might refuse to try or become frustrated very quickly. He misses the chance to learn from his mistakes, and therefore learning is limited.

Focusing on learning goals rather than performance goals is especially important for parents of young children. Setting performance goals can make us forget about the important learning that is taking place all the time. For example, the mother who sets a "potty performance" goal may find that she is frustrated and her child stressed. This is true for all of us, but for a young child, the journey toward the goal is the most important part.

ACTIVITY
for parents

Thinking about learning and performance goals

Think of a time when you set an unrealistic performance goal for yourself, like...

- I will not get upset with the kids today.
- I will have the dinner dishes all cleaned up before I put the kids to bed.
- I will read the whole newspaper every day.

Did you reach your goal? Do you think you would have learned more and had a more satisfying experience if you had set learning goals like...

- I will try to understand why I feel so out of control when the kids...
- I will look at ways to organize dinnertime so that I'm not so stressed for time.
- I will scan the newspaper for articles that are interesting and relevant to me and my family.

Can you think of a time when you took a course, learned something new or acquired a new skill because you were interested in it?

Was the process or the product more important to you? What did you learn about yourself?

How do learning goals vs. performance goals affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5

The learning process is in high gear. The child is naturally motivated to learn as much as she can, as fast as she can. Setting performance goals – realistic or unrealistic – is not only unnecessary, it can put stress on the child. Pressure to perform does not make a child want to learn. A pressured child may balk or withdraw, or become so anxious that she is afraid to try new things for fear of failure.

Children who are allowed to lead their own learning will naturally choose and move toward achievable learning goals. The adults' role is to **P**rovide opportunities, materials and experiences; **A**llow the child to lead and learn from doing; and be a good model and **T**each when the child needs assistance (PAT – see page 7).

The school years: 6 – 12

When children start school, the pressure to perform to other people's expectations becomes a real issue. Children are very sensitive to being compared with others. Self-esteem and motivation can be damaged if they feel they are failing to "measure up." Continue to focus on the process of learning and nurture your child's special intelligences at home (see Topic 6 in Module Two).

Encourage enthusiasm – children will learn what they care about. Children in the same classroom may be at different developmental stages. An age difference of only months can be very significant developmentally.

Adolescence: 13 – 18

Adolescents face great pressure to perform. They must deal with academic and social performance goals. Some goals are unrealistic and therefore stressful – for example, being popular, looking like a model, being cool. Perhaps now, more than at any other time, they need you to help them focus on the learning process they are going through – even though they seem independent and not too interested in you.

Adulthood

Adults who have had the opportunity to focus on learning goals will be lifelong explorers who learn for the sake of learning and the satisfaction it brings. They will naturally foster meaningful learning for others.

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MODULE TWO

More About Understanding Learning

Introduction

This module points out your child's own special intelligences and learning styles, explains what motivates children to learn, explains learning and remembering, and shows how developmental readiness affects children's learning.

More About Understanding Learning Topics

Topic 6: Multiple Intelligences
Topic 7: Motivation
Topic 8: Ways of Remembering
Topic 9: Learning Styles
Topic 10: Developmental Stages of Learning

TOPIC 6

Multiple Intelligences

Definition

Multiple intelligences means that people are smart in many ways.

Examples

- Some children may be especially good at running and climbing. (*body smart*)
- Some children can empathize when a little playmate gets hurt. (*people smart*)
- Some children like to sing or listen to music. (*music smart*)

Key messages

- The concept of multiple intelligences is empowering to you and your child.
- Intelligence is not limited to being good at things like reading or math.
- Recognizing and celebrating a child's own special intelligences will allow the budding and full flowering of self-esteem that goes with it.

About multiple intelligences

We are all gifted in some ways: maybe in making up riddles or comforting others. We are all also ordinary in some ways: maybe playing tennis or singing. And we are all kind of klutzy in others: maybe tying shoelaces or playing cards.

Children are also smart in their own way. Not just clever, bright or talented, but actually intelligent. Unfortunately, being smart is often equated with "book smart." Many think that people are not really intelligent unless they are good at reading, spelling and writing. But this is only one kind of intelligence. The true potential of our children's multiple intelligences needs to be recognized and developed.

Research shows that there are at least seven different ways to be smart. In his book, *Frames of Mind*, Howard Gardner outlines seven distinct intelligences:

1. Word Smart
(Verbal – Linguistic Intelligence)

- the ability to use spoken or written words effectively. This includes understanding and using language well, especially words, stories, sounds, meanings, spelling, writing and grammar. Children who have this kind of intelligence learn best by verbalizing, hearing or seeing words.

2. Math Smart
(*Logical – Mathematical Intelligence*)

- the ability to understand and use numbers easily. This includes understanding patterns of numbers, measurement, scientific concepts, logic puzzles and prices. Children who have this kind of intelligence learn best by seeing patterns, asking questions and figuring out the "why" of things.

3. Picture Smart
(*Visual – Spatial Intelligence*)

- the ability to visualize concepts. This includes reading maps and plans, drawing diagrams, figuring out how to build things and giving directions. Children with this kind of intelligence learn best by visualizing things, seeing pictures, drawing and doodling.

4. Body Smart
(*Bodily or Kinesthetic Intelligence*)

- a strength in the area of bodily movement, like balance, coordination, dexterity and speed. This includes a natural ability to play sports, dance, mime and do other athletic activities. These children learn best by using their bodies, moving or acting things out, and being directly involved in activities.

5. Music Smart
(*Musical Intelligence*)

- the ability to hear, discriminate and understand musical patterns, play a musical instrument, read music, sing, whistle, hum, remember melodies, keep time rhythmically to music. These children learn best using music, rhythm and dance.

6. People Smart
(*Interpersonal Intelligence*)

- the ability to relate well to others, including "tuning in to" other people's feelings, desires and ideas; a natural ability to relate to others; having lots of friends; and resolving conflicts. These children learn best in group situations by relating and cooperating with others.

7. Self Smart
(*Intrapersonal Intelligence*)

- the ability to act appropriately based on self-knowledge. This includes a strong personality and a tendency to think carefully, have strong opinions and work toward goals in a quiet way. These children learn best when allowed to work independently and according to their own nature.

We can use our knowledge about the different kinds of intelligences to help children develop their natural talents and abilities. Observe and get to know your child's likes, dislikes and ways of dealing with everyday happenings. Discover and develop your child's different intelligences, noting areas of interest and particular talents and skills.

A child who is interested in music and has natural rhythm demonstrates this by moving his body, singing along and clapping his hands when listening to a favourite tune. Encourage this musical intelligence by playing music, watching, joining in and showing him that you like and appreciate his talents.

A child who has a natural ability to take interconnecting blocks apart and put them together again in different shapes and sizes will continue to do so in more challenging ways if this behaviour is applauded as natural curiosity and talent rather than misbehaviour.

You can provide opportunities for children to develop their intelligences in all areas.
By providing opportunities for children to discover their strengths, you are encouraging and nurturing the development of all the intelligences.

By knowing the child – watching her play, having conversations and interacting daily – you will soon learn where she shines. Your role is to follow the child's lead.

In his book, *In Their Own Way: Discovering and Encouraging Your Child's Personal Learning Style*, Thomas Armstrong tells the story about the animals who decided to create a school for climbing, flying, running, swimming and digging. They couldn't agree on which subject was most important, so they agreed that all the students had to take the same curriculum. The rabbit was an expert in running, but almost drowned in swimming class. The experience shocked her so much that she never could run as well after that. The eagle was a whiz at flying, but when he showed up for digging class, he was so inadequate that he was sent to digging remediation class. It took up so much of his time that he soon forgot how to fly. Similar things happened to all the other animals, too. They could no longer shine in their areas of expertise because they all had negative experiences in their areas of weakest ability.

There is a need for all of us to have ability in some of the intelligences. We need to develop areas where we are weak as best as we can.

How do multiple intelligences affect children's lifelong learning?

Recognizing and valuing children's many forms of intelligence will enable them to reach their potential in many areas of learning throughout their life. If they have been provided with opportunities to discover and try out their various intelligences, and their efforts have been encouraged, they will have the confidence to take learning risks throughout their life. Through their explorations, they will find that they are naturally better at some things than others, and that they can get "smarter" in other areas as well, if they have the motivation.

Activity for parents

Discover your strengths

Think about your adult friends. What specific talents and skills do they have? Do you know someone who can sit down at a piano and play a complicated tune by ear? Someone who can take a piece of fabric, cut it into pieces and sew an outfit that looks as if it were made by a professional? Someone who can come into your house and tell you what materials you'll need to renovate your kitchen, complete with a list of sizes and amounts? These are all examples of intelligences.

Think about your own intelligences. List them, starting with your strongest one and ending where you think you are the weakest.

Think about how good you feel each time you perform a task well. When you're able to shine in your own special intelligences – cooking, carpentry, golf, speaking, writing or playing guitar, that "good feeling" is self-esteem. Children need high self-esteem to reach their goals and be happy, productive adults.

TOPIC 7

Motivation

Definition

Motivation is the internal drive that makes us want to do something to meet our basic needs.

Examples

- Some people take classes in ballroom dancing. (*fun*)
- Some people look forward to getting away on a vacation with their family. (*love and belonging*)
- Some people take night classes to improve their knowledge. (*power and control*)

Key messages

- Motivation comes from within to meet a basic need.
- Knowing what motivates a child can help you to provide the best learning environment possible.

About motivation

We often wish we could make children do certain things – for example, eat their vegetables, leave the china ornaments alone or use the potty. However, we can't make people do something they don't want to do – unless we use force or persuasion.

Motivation comes from within. For example, we cannot make a person believe something. We cannot force a person to want to do something. But we can arrange certain conditions. We are all motivated to meet our basic needs. Psychiatrist William Glasser in his book *Choice Theory* tells us that all humans have five basic needs: love and belonging, fun, freedom, power (control) and survival.

Love and Belonging: Our need for love and belonging is met in our intimate and community relationships. Our husband or wife, children, other family members and close friends help to satisfy our need to get and give love. Other relationships – with workmates, social groups and neighbours – all provide ways to satisfy our need to belong.

Fun: Fun is anything that gives us pleasure. Fun is different things to different people. It could be reading a book, playing a musical instrument, watching a sunset. Both children and adults learn when they are having fun.

Freedom: Our need for freedom is met by being able to make choices in our lives, both large and small. Some examples are where we live, what work we do, whom we associate with, what we eat and what we do in our leisure time.

Power: Power is a sense of importance. Having a positive effect on people's lives, gaining respect, competence and achievement are ways of meeting our need for power. Sometimes, our accomplishments are recognized through praise and awards.

Survival: People need basic physical requirements for survival, for example, air, water, food and shelter.

If people are not motivated in a particular learning situation, it means they feel their needs are not being met, so they feel no inner drive to engage in it.

Madeline Hunter in her book *Motivation* has identified several factors that have a powerful effect on motivation. By keeping these in mind, your job of helping children to satisfy their needs will be much easier.

Concern: Children are motivated to do things they are concerned about. "I don't care" can mean "I won't try." If the child is content with the way things are, he will not feel motivated to change them. If he is not satisfied with the situation as it is, he will feel some need to change it. However, too much concern may turn into anxiety and may decrease motivation.

Tone: The feeling you express in your tone of voice may be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Making the atmosphere pleasant increases motivation. If you need to be firm, use a pleasant tone of voice. Use it again when praising the child after he does what you ask.

Interest: We are naturally more motivated to learn what interests us. Interest, like reading, is learned, usually by having good experiences with that subject. You can help children develop interest by:
- making learning more meaningful
- making learning more vivid or different from what is usually experienced.

Success: Children's motivation increases as their success increases.

Knowledge of Results: Children need honest feedback. Answer questions like "How am I doing?" in an honest way. This lets children know when they are right or what they need to change. Remember to answer these questions in an encouraging way.

Rewards: Rewards can be external (prizes, marks or praise) or internal (satisfaction from within). When the activity or learning itself is the reward for the effort, learning is more productive, satisfying and self-directed.

Children are highly motivated to learn about their world. Sometimes they are motivated to get into things you'd rather they didn't! Knowledge is power, survival, fun, freedom and belonging!

Our role as adults is to make sure we don't discourage the motivation to learn. Provide interesting things to see and do. To ensure that your child will be successful at most of her learning efforts, give honest feedback and encourage her to learn more.

Most self-directed learning is naturally motivational. It brings its own intrinsic rewards. However, your child will need to learn some things even though he may not be very motivated. Dressing properly for the weather, observing safety rules and developing social skills are some examples of necessary learnings.

When a person appears unmotivated, it usually means that needs are not being met in that situation. This insight will help you think about how you can help your child satisfy her needs while learning. For example, your child's need to have some control (power) over her own life may be satisfied when you ask, "Do you want to wear your blue hat or your green hat today?" instead of just putting a hat on her head. Allowing and encouraging your child to make age-appropriate choices not only motivates her, but helps to develop essential thinking strategies.

ACTIVITY for parents

What motivates you?

Think of an activity that you do regularly, such as a job, working out, a volunteer project, a class, a leisure activity. What motivates you to do this activity? What basic needs does it meet?

Think of an activity that you used to do, but have stopped participating in. What originally motivated you to start? What basic needs did it satisfy? Why did you stop?

How does motivation affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5

Young children are most strongly motivated by the need to survive, and by the need to be loved and nurtured. Children who do not receive emotional nourishment through loving touches, talking and stimulation, as well as food and other physical necessities, will "fail to thrive." In extreme cases, life-threatening situations can arise when children are deprived of basic needs.

The school years: 6 – 12

Children have great cognitive learning capacity and continue to be self-motivated to learn. Self-motivation will fade if they meet failure or negative feedback, or do not find the things they are required to learn interesting or rewarding.

Adolescence: 13 – 18

Adolescents are powerfully motivated by the need to belong. The intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligences come to the fore as teenagers struggle to understand their inner selves and their relationships with others.

Adulthood

Adults continue to be motivated to meet their basic needs throughout life. When motivated, they seek new ways to satisfy and enrich these needs.

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TOPIC 8

Ways of Remembering

Definition

Ways of remembering are the ways the brain uses to store and recall information in order to learn.

Examples

- To pass the written test for your driver's licence, you study the driver's manual. *(semantic)*
- To pass the road test for your driver's licence, you practise driving. *(experiential)*
- You remember that you left your keys at the laundromat because you remember having them when you were at your sister's just before that. *(contextual)*

Key messages

- Remembering is an important part of learning.
- Understanding the three main ways of remembering can help you make remembering easier for your child.

About ways of remembering

There are three main ways of remembering:

1. Words (Written or Spoken) – Semantic

- words, prose and symbols. Book learning is usually the most difficult. Of all the ways of learning, the brain is least efficient at remembering print and text (Jensen, 1996). That's why you usually have to go back and reread the story or study the prose to recall information.

2. Hands-on Learning – Experiential

- using all the senses. Hands-on learning stores memories in your brain and your body. We use our senses to see, hear, smell, touch and taste to learn things. Our brains store memories according to the senses we have used. When children experience something using all their senses, they have a much better chance of recalling it because it has been stored in several places in the brain according to each sense.

3. Relation Learning – Contextual

- information recall based on where we were, who we were with, what was happening, and when it happened. We remember something in relation to when,

> where, how and why it happened, and who and what was involved. We do not recall things in isolation. If you are asked to remember what you ate for dinner last night, you do it by putting yourself back into the situation you were in when you had dinner: "I was at a restaurant with two friends having a vegetarian lasagne." In contextual learning, the brain learns and remembers by connecting things.

As children develop vocabulary, they rely on experiential and contextual learning to store and remember information.

Children who are learning to relate new things often relate them to something they have already learned. For example, they might have played with a white cat at home when they see a rabbit in the woods, they try to figure out if it's the same. It has fur, it has ears, its face is similar. It's a big job trying to remember the features of a cat and then compare them to the rabbit they have just seen. The senses may say that the animals are the same, but the context will probably tell children they are different in some way.

Talking, listening and reading to children are all important activities in helping children learn how to remember. Discussions about a wide variety of topics provide another clue for the child to make sense of things. Each question, each discussion, each story adds to the experience.

Adults who interact with children regularly are allowing them to gain new experiences, prior knowledge and memories.

How do ways of remembering affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5
Children are developing ways of remembering – efficient ways of storing and recalling information and experiences. Experiential and contextual ways of remembering are predominant. Semantic learning is beginning.

The school years: 6 – 12
Experiential and contextual ways of remembering are being refined. Children are building their semantic ways of remembering through reading and using texts of all kinds.

Adolescence: 13 – 18
Further refinement of experiential, contextual and semantic ways of remembering takes place. The focus is on intrapersonal (self) and interpersonal (other) learning.

Adulthood
By this time the learning and memory systems have been established. Most adults have developed tricks and tools to help them remember things, like making lists or rhyming words.

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ACTIVITIES for parents

What do you remember?

Try learning something using each of these different ways of remembering.

Semantic: Read something. A few hours later, try to recall in detail what you read.

Experiential: Use your senses – all of your senses – to learn something. A few hours later, tell someone what you learned.

Contextual: Ask who, what, when, where, why and how questions as you learn something. A few hours later, recall the answers to these six questions.

Putting it together

Put a toy together:

- read the directions (semantic)
- put the toy together (experiential)
- use questions (who? what? when? etc.) to store the experience (contextual)
- explain how you did it to a friend

Your playing child

Watch your child for an hour, for example, as she plays in the sand. Notice:

- What does she do with the sand?
- What senses is she using?
- What does she seem to be learning?
- What do you think she'll remember from this play?

TOPIC 9

Learning Styles

Definition

People learn in different ways. Some learn best by seeing, others by hearing, and still others by touching.

Examples

- Some children want to watch someone show them how to do something. (*seeing*)
- Some children follow directions better when they hear them than when they read them. (*hearing*)
- Others seem to want to touch and feel everything. (*touching*)

Key messages

- When you know a child's preferred learning style, you can help that child learn more effectively.
- It is important for you to know about your own learning style because this is the one you use when teaching your child. However, your learning style can be different from the child's. This could be frustrating for both of you.

About learning styles

There are four basic learning styles:

- **Visual** (seeing)
- **Auditory** (hearing)
- **Tactile** (touching)
- **Kinesthetic** (moving)

Most people have a preferred learning style, although they use a variety of styles too. People have varying degrees of preference – some are highly visual, auditory, tactile or kinesthetic. Others seem to like all four learning styles.

It's important to discover how you learn best and how your child learns best. The best way is through observation: by watching her play, alone or with friends, and by talking with her. Watch and think about what your child does and how she is doing it.

You can help your child become an effective learner and a confident person with developed talents and skills. The activities you do can be simple. Provide opportunities for him to explore the world using all of his senses – seeing, hearing, smelling, touching and tasting. A child's home is a learning laboratory: he learns by playing with clay, puzzles, colour, blocks, music, dance, conversation, songs, games, books, crayons and paper, pots and pans.

How do learning styles affect children's lifelong learning?

At any age, children learn more easily using their preferred learning style. But just because they have a preferred style doesn't mean they can't and won't learn any other way. In fact, they should be encouraged to use and improve **all** modes of learning. The more senses children use to learn, the more information they can absorb! A good guideline is to allow children to use their preferred style when learning essential information, and to practise using other learning styles when learning other things.

Very young children are usually tactile and kinesthetic learners. Visual and auditory preferences may emerge later. Schools have traditionally used visual and auditory teaching styles the most, especially in the upper grades. Children who learn easily through these modes are usually successful in school, while tactile and kinesthetic learners may find school difficult.

All future learning is affected by early learning experiences. If these experiences are positive and satisfying, the foundations are formed for enthusiastic lifelong learning. Attention to learning styles when a child is young will help to make learning positive and enjoyable.

ACTIVITY for parents

Learning style checklist

What do you think is your preferred learning style?

Visual learners often:

- remember visual details
- prefer to see what they are learning
- like to have paper and pens handy
- doodle while listening
- have trouble following lectures
- like to write down instructions or telephone numbers

Auditory learners often:

- enjoy discussion
- remember by talking out loud
- need to have things explained orally
- have trouble with written instructions
- talk to themselves while learning something new
- repeat a telephone number to remember it

Tactile and kinesthetic learners often:

- prefer activities
- want to actually do whatever is being talked about or learned
- like to move around while listening or talking
- often "talk" with their hands
- like to touch things to learn about them
- remember things by recalling who did what, rather than who said what

Watch your child at play. Does she already show a preferred way to learn? Remember that young children are still developing and most are very tactile and kinesthetic – they want and need to be actively involved to understand things. Make sure your child has many opportunities to use **all** of the learning styles so that she can develop to her full potential.

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TOPIC 10

Developmental Stages of Learning

Definition

Developmental stages of learning are the blocks of time – from birth to 18 – when the growth of the body affects learning in different ways.

Examples

- Newborns cannot eat solid food until they have teeth and can chew.
- Children are ready to walk when their balance has developed and their legs are strong enough to support them.

Key messages

- Children's learning is affected by the normal stages of growth.
- You can offer learning experiences at appropriate times.
- Children may not be developmentally ready to learn a certain thing at a certain time.
- Understanding the developmental stages of learning can help you be patient when progress is slow and be alert to possible problems.

About developmental stages of learning

From birth to 18 years old, our bodies are growing, developing and learning how to learn. Our senses are taking in information all the time.

A newborn's brain is ready to soak up information like a dry sponge soaks up water. But unlike a sponge, no matter how much information the brain takes in, it can absorb more. We use less than 70% of our brain capacity for neural connections (Jensen, 1996). The brain processes millions of bits of information per hour. A child's first touches, tastes, smells, sights and sounds are registered in different parts of the brain and linked with other bits of information.

During the first 18 years, there are significant developmental learning stages when the body and mind show growth spurts and shift gears to understand the world. These stages take place at about the same time for all of us.

How do developmental stages of learning affect children's lifelong learning?

The preschool years: birth – 5

Two major developmental stages occur during these years: birth to 2 years of age, and 3 to 5 years of age. During the first 2 years, the brain and body are consumed with figuring out the essentials of survival. An infant depends totally on adults and everything is new. From 3 to 5 years of age, children explore, explore, explore. They learn language, master body movement, figure out relationships and form a self-image.

The school years: 6 – 12

Learning focuses on forming patterns by linking information. One bit of information is connected with another bit of information to make bigger and bigger pictures of the world. Young children have very little knowledge or concern about people outside their immediate families. They are naturally self-centred. Adults guide children in their understanding of relationships. Children believe what adults tell them about themselves and others. If children are told that they are smart, they believe it. If told they are stupid, they believe that, too. Positive and negative attitudes are most often learned at home.

Adolescence: 13 – 18

Bodies are changing rapidly. Chemical signals are released and the brain starts paying attention to relationships. Romantic and sexual interests begin – and it takes time for skills to develop in these areas. Teens spend time thinking about who they are and how others fit in. This can be a difficult time of life, especially for those who feel even a little bit different from their peers. Fitting in is very important.

Adulthood

The big changes in brain growth have already happened. As the natural process of aging takes place, our physical bodies become less efficient. But this is not true for our minds. For as long as we live, we can still learn.

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ACTIVITY for Parents

Match 'em up!

The goal of this activity is to provide:

- an awareness of five major categories of child development
- examples of skills and abilities that relate to the categories
- an approximate time range when these skills and abilities begin to develop

Note: It takes more information than is provided in Topic 10 to determine if a child is developing on a steady and healthy course. To learn more about this important subject, talk to people in the health or education field who work with young children.

Read the examples for each category. Choose an age range from the ones below that you think fits with the examples of skills and abilities in each category.

The corresponding age ranges are given on the next page.

Age Range:	**3–6 months (Infant)**	**13–18 months (Older Baby)**	**2–3 years (Toddler)**	**4–5 years (Young Child)**

Categories of development **Age range**

Cognitive:

- follows one-step requests ____________________
- can put together toys with different parts ____________________
- counts to three ____________________
- eyes locate source of sound ____________________

Social-Emotional

- understands the needs of others ____________________
- likes peek-a-boo ____________________
- can be inflexible and rigid ____________________
- plays apart from familiar people ____________________

Motor

- stands firmly when held ______________________
- jumps up and down with both feet ______________________
- catches many things ______________________
- hops on one foot ______________________

Language

- responds to simple questions ______________________
- uses single words often ______________________
- can tell stories with some sequence ______________________
- recognizes own name ______________________

Self-Help

- stretches arms to be picked up ______________________
- unbuttons large buttons ______________________
- can take responsibility for acting safely ______________________
- uses spoon without a lot of spilling ______________________

Answers

Cognitive:

• eyes locate source of sound	3–5 months
• follows one-step requests	13–18 months
• counts to three	2-3 years
• put together toys	4–5 years

Social-Emotional:

• likes peek-a-boo	3–5 months
• plays apart ... people	13–18 months
• can be inflexible and rigid	2-3 years
• understands the needs ...	4–5 years

Motor:

• stands firmly when held	3–5 months
• jumps off floor with both feet	13–18 months
• hops on one foot	2–3 years
• catches many things	4–5 years

Language:

• recognizes own name	3–5 months
• uses single words often	13–18 months
• responds to ... questions	2-3 years
• can tell stories ... sequence	4–5 years

Self-Help:

• stretches arms to be picked up	3–5 months
• uses spoon without ... spilling	13–18 months
• unbuttons large buttons	2–3 years
• can take responsibility ... safely	4–5 years

MODULE THREE

Process of Thinking

Christine Tripp

Introduction

Thinking is what we do when we gather and organize information, process that information and make decisions about what to do with that information. Thinking and learning go hand-in-hand. The brain of a child who gets lots of multisensory stimulation will be constantly gathering information and making connections that link new information with previous experiences. If these sensory experiences occur in the presence of positive emotions and the child is given the language to describe the experiences, an ideal learning situation occurs. The brain becomes "wired" to make the connections permanent.

The Process of Thinking module identifies 14 specific thinking strategies that are essential for every kind of learning, from tying shoelaces to crossing a street safely, from choosing who to invite to a birthday party to learning how to read.

The more opportunities you provide for your children to observe, compare and contrast, categorize, recognize patterns, predict, etc., the more thinking connections they will make. Give your children appropriate words so their thinking is connected to language. Your children will then be able to use that strategy again when they need it.

Process of Thinking Topics

Topic 11: Observe
Topic 12: Compare and Contrast
Topic 13: Pattern
Topic 14: Predict
Topic 15: Main Idea
Topic 16: Understanding Pictures
Topic 17: Real and Pretend

TOPIC 11

Observe

Definition

Observing is using all your senses to learn about the world.

Examples

- Babies learn by touching, seeing, listening to and tasting while playing with a rattle.
- Toddlers learn by tasting, touching, smelling, seeing and even listening (squish, squish) while eating.
- Young children learn by seeing, smelling and touching while finger painting.
- A mother learns about her child as she holds him in her arms. The mother's senses of sight, hearing, smell and touch are involved – and so are the child's.

Key messages

- Everything we know is learned through our senses of sight, sound, smell, touch and taste.
- The more senses we use, the more we learn.
- There are many ways of using observation in daily life to help children learn about the world.

About observing

Getting as much information as possible through observation is a key thinking strategy. Without information, we can't use other thinking strategies very well. We need information to compare and contrast, to label, to understand cause and effect, to make decisions.

Observing is directly linked to multisensory learning. By using as many senses as possible, we are able to get more information.

How does observing affect children's lifelong learning?

The more opportunities adults give children – from birth – to learn about things using as many senses as possible, the more information they will have about the world.

This "prior knowledge" forms the essential building blocks of thinking for a lifetime. It will help in reading, writing, understanding science, math, social studies and other subjects. Future reading comprehension also depends on prior knowledge.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Observing with your child

You can develop observation as you do everyday things with your child. For example, put a new kind of cereal in a bowl. Explore the cereal together:

- Look at the cereal.
- Listen to the cereal.
- Smell the cereal.
- Touch the cereal.
- Taste the cereal.

As you and your child use your senses to get information about the cereal, use words that tell how the cereal looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes. For example, the cereal looks round, sounds crunchy, tastes like apples.

You can use observation on a trip to the grocery store, a visit to a relative or while playing with a pet, and with many other things.

TOPIC 12

Compare and Contrast

Definition

Comparing and contrasting is observing objects or events and noting how they are the same and how they are different.

Examples

- Babies are aware of the special smell, voice and touch of their parents.
- When toddlers learn the word "car," they may say "car" for any moving vehicle.
- Young children compare their hair colour with a friend's.
- Preschoolers form opinions about favourite things based on comparisons toys, books, videos, people, food and activities.
- Parents notice a difference in their child's behaviour when she has a good nap in the afternoon.

Key messages

- **Children use comparing and contrasting to develop concepts and language that become prior knowledge.**
- **Using phrases like "This looks, smells, tastes, sounds, or feels like..." and "This reminds me of..." encourages children to compare and contrast.**

About compare and contrast

When we compare, we look for what is the same about two or more objects or events. When we contrast, we look for what is different. Often, we do both. Comparing and contrasting begins at a very early age. Babies often cry when they are picked up by a stranger. They are able to contrast your smell and the sound of your voice with this new person.

Comparing and contrasting helps us to "stick" new information to old information, our prior knowledge. When children see relationships among events or objects, they know where to file the new information in their mind. This makes it easier to remember things. As language is developing, children compare and contrast to learn new words and concepts.

How does comparing and contrasting affect children's lifelong learning?

When children compare and contrast, they are able to form opinions, make decisions and learn new things. When children learn to read, they compare new words to those they already know. If you can read the word "cat," you can probably read bat, sat, rat, mat, hat and fat. Comparing one story with another and with real life also helps their learning.

Comparing and contrasting also allows children to form judgements and individual values. Learning to respect what is the same and different about people is an important part of developing friendships and good working relationships.

ACTIVITY for parents to do with children

Snack time

This activity compares and contrasts using two kinds of food. Once you have done it, you'll think of many other opportunities to use comparing and contrasting in daily activities with your child.

Choose two different foods at snack time. Try to pick foods that have some similarities and some differences. For example, choose an orange and a banana, two colours of cheeses or a cookie and a cracker.

Ask your child questions about the similarities and differences between the two foods. Your child might notice that one of the foods is orange and one is yellow, or that both are cold. You can model this by thinking out loud, "One cheese is orange and one is white." You can also use phrases like "This reminds me of..." or "This looks, sounds, smells, feels and tastes like..." This is comparing and contrasting.

Try comparing and contrasting toys, books, music, nature, animals, events, movies, people and other things.

TOPIC 13

Pattern

Definition

A pattern is a regularly repeated sequence or arrangement of objects, ideas, events or behaviours.

Examples

- Babies are comforted and reassured by a consistent pattern, like eating, changing, playing, cuddling and napping.
- Toddlers have a pattern of saying "no" to everything you ask them.
- Children learning to talk add "s" or "es" to any word they want to pluralize, like "sheeps" or "kidses."
- The daily routine of a kindergarten class provides children with a sense of comfort, predictability and security.
- Parents usually have their children follow a bedtime routine.

Key messages

- Patterns help us to predict and remember things.
- Patterns can be pleasing and fun in themselves
- Patterns can be changed.

About recognizing patterns

Recognizing patterns is important for predicting what is going to happen next and for remembering the things we learn.

Babies are learning the patterns of turn taking and sequence in conversation when they engage in face-to-face play (like peekaboo or making faces) with their parents.

Children are naturally drawn to patterns and will make patterns themselves with blocks, paper, toy cars or dolls. You can enhance children's recognition of patterns by discussing their patterns with them. Point out patterns that they might not be aware of   in wallpaper, in nature, in daily routines.

A consistent daily routine is important to children's sense of security and well-being. When parents and caregivers stick to a regular pattern, while leaving room for flexibility, children feel safe to explore, observe and discover their world.

Children and parents recognize the patterns of each other's behaviour and use them to predict each other's actions and reactions. Being aware of these patterns can help us to change the ones that are not working well. For example, if you know that your child cries when it's time to go home, let him know that you're going to go 5 minutes before you leave. This change in pattern might help to stop the crying.

How does recognizing patterns affect children's lifelong learning?

Being able to understand and see patterns helps us to make connections to our prior knowledge. A pattern is a sequence that happens over and over. When a child sees, hears, smells, touches or tastes something new, she can ask herself "What does this remind me of?"

Language is a pattern. You need to recognize the patterns of language to understand what you're reading. When children can see language patterns, they learn that words, sentences and paragraphs come together to make a story. Being able to group information in this way makes learning easier. Children who have difficulty recognizing language patterns try to memorize each word or sentence, taking valuable energy away from comprehending and remembering the story.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Exploring patterns

Children are naturally attracted to patterns. Coloured blocks provide a good opportunity for exploring patterns together.

Ask your child to describe the patterns she is making. For example, she might have her blocks lined up as "red, blue, red, blue..." Try building the pattern together. As your child gets older, the patterns may become more complicated.

Try making and noticing other patterns together - use toys, clothes, nature, animals and people. Once children start recognizing patterns on their own, you can try some prediction and memory games. Shared reading is a perfect opportunity for these activities. With a book that hasn't been read before, look at the cover and ask "What do you think this book is about?" Later, you can ask "What do you think will happen next?" With a familiar book, try asking "Do you remember what happens after the duckling learns to swim?" Reading a favourite book over and over helps your child to learn the pattern of a story and the patterns of language.

TOPIC 14

Predict

Definition

Predict means to figure out what will happen next or in the future, based on what you already know.

Examples

- Infants reach for the key on the toy piano to make the musical people play.
- Toddlers predict that you will clean up the cereal they throw on the floor.
- Preschoolers share their blocks in hopes that their playmates will share their stuffed animals.
- Preschoolers predict that when the doorbell rings, someone is at the door.
- Parents are able to predict their child's tantrum before it occurs.

Key messages

- Being able to predict what will happen gives children a sense of security and well-being.
- Children's ability to predict develops naturally when their daily life is consistent and routines run smoothly.

About predicting

For children, being able to predict what will happen gives comfort, security and control. It frees them from worrying about their basic needs and lets them focus on the work of learning and enjoying life. When children can predict their parents' positive responses or their teacher's encouragement, they can confidently make decisions about their actions.

Prediction helps children to know how their actions affect others. It helps them to develop conversational skills, gain self-control and build confidence.

Children are learning how to interact with other children and adults in appropriate ways. As they develop the ability to predict the results of their actions, they learn that good behaviour gets better results – for example, that sharing toys will be reciprocated.

How does predicting affect children's lifelong learning?

Prediction allows us to plan ahead and be more in control of our lives. Every time we make a plan, we are predicting. In school, being able to predict what's going to happen next and what's required of you as a student helps you to stay organized, develop good study habits and take responsibility for your own school work.

Prediction plays a major role in understanding what we read. Good readers are always predicting what will come next – in the sentence and in the story. Prediction also helps us to figure out words we don't know.

Activity to do with children

Predicting

Notice how your child predicts the events in her daily routine. After a nap, she might say to you "It's snack time." Draw her attention to predictions by supporting and encouraging them, for example, "Wow! You know it's snack time because we always have a snack after your nap."

Once your child has a basic understanding of prediction, try asking questions about other activities, like "What will we see on the way to Grandma and Grandpa's house?" or "What will happen after we get home from kindergarten?"

As your child develops a sense of how stories work, try some prediction while you read together. Try thinking out loud as you read – "I wonder what this book is about" or "What do you think is going to happen to this little pig?"

TOPIC 15

Main Idea

Definition

The main idea is the "point" of a story, conversation or set of instructions.

Examples

- Infants reach for a toy several times before being able to grab it.
- Toddlers can follow simple instructions.
- Preschoolers can carry on a conversation with you about the animals they saw at the zoo today.
- Preschoolers can tell you all about what a particular character did in the latest episode of their favourite TV program.
- Parents hope that their children can get the main idea about things, such as the connection between their behaviour and the consequences of that behaviour.

Key messages

- Every task, story and conversation has a main idea or purpose.
- A bigger goal or main idea can be reached by setting smaller goals or main ideas.
- Adults can model main idea in their conversations, directions and actions and by reading stories.

About main idea

The main idea is the most important piece of information. We communicate a main idea by telling a story, having a conversation or giving instructions.

A child needs to understand main idea to communicate well and to give and follow directions. Children develop the ability to follow directions gradually. Start with simple one-step instructions and work your way up to three or four slowly. For example, when you ask your child to go to the kitchen and get you a spoon, he has to understand that bringing you the spoon is the main idea, point or purpose of the task. Otherwise, he might get a fork, or forget altogether.

Young children often have trouble "sticking to the point" when they are trying to tell you something. You can help young children stick to the point of the story they are telling by gently directing them back to the main idea. You can do this by asking open-ended questions like "What happened to the frog?" or "How did James find his way home?"

Understanding the main idea of a story or conversation helps children to communicate more clearly and get the point across. When you read to children, they learn how a story works – that it has a beginning, a middle and an end – and that it has a main idea. Talk about the story and what the main idea is.

How does understanding main idea affect children's lifelong learning?

Understanding the main idea means that we don't have to know every detail about something in order to use it. It also helps us to see the connections between people, places and things. Children need to understand the main idea to communicate well. Understanding the main idea is also needed to give and follow directions. Narrative or informational prose contains both a main idea and supporting ideas. Being able to see the main idea is essential to understanding what they read.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Making the bed

The main idea of this activity is to make the bed. Making the bed is accomplished in several steps.

Choose your first step and describe it. For example, "Let's pull up the sheets together." Ask your child to choose the next step. He might say "Put the pillows on the bed" or "Put the stuffed animals on the bed." Continue like this until the bed is made.

After a while, your child will be able to follow two, then three instructions – "Pull up the sheet, straighten the blanket and put the pillows on." Eventually, he'll get the main idea and make the bed on his own.

Ask your child "What did we just do?" When he says "We made the bed," he's got the main idea!

You can help your child by saying "We just made the bed together. What a great job!" The two of you can try this with all kinds of tasks, from making muffins to tidying up toys. Don't forget to compliment your child on his or her part in doing the activity.

TOPIC 16

Understanding Pictures

Definition

Understanding a picture means looking at or creating a picture and getting meaning from it.

Examples

- Infants can distinguish pictures of their mother's face from any other face (Bee, 1992).
- Toddlers may have a favourite book that they like to touch, look at and hold.
- Toddlers look at pictures of themselves and their family and show that they recognize themselves by pointing or smiling.
- Preschoolers make "maps" in the sand for their cars, trucks and bulldozers.
- Parents bring out their photo album and talk about their childhood with their children.

Key messages

- You can help children's understanding by modelling thinking out loud while looking at pictures together.
- You can support children's visual and comprehension skills by exploring pictures together.

About understanding pictures

Pictures help us to understand information by presenting it in a direct and simplified way. They help us understand prose. Pictures sometimes express feelings and thoughts that can't be put into words. Pictures can be drawings, photos, paintings, maps, charts, graphs, plans and diagrams.

Babies like a few pictures placed close enough for them to see. Change them often.

Looking at a picture can help your child understand and remember a story. Children who have trouble visualizing will understand more if they talk about pictures while looking at them.

Look at books and talk about pictures with toddlers. Enjoy a book together in whatever way or order they want. Also, enjoy painting or drawing together and talking about it.

Children who draw their own pictures develop their visualization skills. Sometimes they create works of art on walls and furniture. Make sure you have lots of paper and other supplies on hand and that your child can find them easily when the artistic spirit takes over!

How does understanding pictures affect children's lifelong learning?

Understanding pictures is an essential lifelong skill. We need to “read” pictures all the time. We read the symbols on rest room doors, the warning symbols on cleaning products, and maps that tell us where to go. The skills we use to read pictures are the same as those we use to read printed words.

House plans, road maps, graphs and charts are all pictures. In the world of work, we have to be able to understand what these pictures are saying. Pictures speak to a different part of our brain than words, and may help us gain a more complete “picture” of an idea or a concept. The ability to understand pictures will also help children to appreciate and learn from the visual arts.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Looking at books

You can practise understanding pictures together when you look at any book with illustrations. Use topics in this module like Observe, and Compare and Contrast, to talk about what you see in a picture.

With a younger child, multisensory books are great, so you can touch, smell and look at lots of different things. If he doesn't talk yet, you can model by thinking out loud about what you see and by labelling things in the picture when he points. An older child will make observations, ask questions and try to predict what will happen next.

As you look at the illustrations, ask and answer questions, like “What's happening?” “Who is in the picture?” “I wonder what will happen next?”

When you do this activity, you are building children's vocabulary, prior knowledge and understanding of concepts and stories. Looking at pictures builds their “visual library” it helps them to visualize new objects and concepts.

TOPIC 17

Real and Pretend

Definition

Real is factual. Pretend is make believe.

Examples

- Babies' reality is what they can see, hear, smell, touch and taste. (*real*)
- Toddlers feed their doll with a toy spoon. (*pretend*)
- Preschoolers pretend that a stick is a horse, a magic wand and a snake. (*pretend*)
- Older preschoolers know that when they are role playing, they are pretending. (*real*)
- Parents will often say things are okay even when they are dealing with tough issues. (*pretend*)

Key messages

- Young children do not have enough prior knowledge to know the difference between real and pretend.
- It is important to model critical thinking and monitor and discuss children's TV watching.
- Children need to be reassured that most of what they see on TV is not real.

About real and pretend

Pretending is part of how children learn. When they play doctor and patient, or pretend that a cardboard box is a car, children are learning social skills as well as processing information.

It is important for children to understand what is real and what is pretend. Today's children are exposed to TV and movies which often have violent or explicit subject matter. As a parent, you will want to set limits based on your own values, but we can't always control what children see and hear. What we can do is talk about it. Children need reassurance that their world is safe and to know that violence hurts people.

Here are some examples of how children's sense of real and make-believe develops over time:

- At age 12 to 14 months, children use a toy for its real purpose, like drinking imaginary juice from a toy cup.
- At age 15 to 21 months, children start feeding imaginary juice or a bottle to a doll, often mimicking the way their parents interact with them.

- At age 2 or 3 years, children use one object to represent another, like pretending that a block is a truck or a pot is a hat.
- From 3 to 4 years old, children begin playing roles and acting out situations, like teacher and student, parent and child, store clerk and customer.
- At about 5 or 6 years old, children are aware that they are "playing" roles and will often assign roles before play begins, trading roles intentionally and planning the action.

How will understanding real and pretend affect children's lifelong learning?

Understanding what is real and what is pretend is essential to all the other thinking processes. Before children can compare and contrast, predict, label, categorize, see cause and effect, and make decisions, they must be able to think critically and distinguish fact from fiction. This leads to well-thought out opinions and values. The more ability that children have to critically distinguish fact from fiction, the more they will be able to see the difference between the two – for example, on TV, on the radio, in advertising, in magazines, on the Internet.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Watching TV

TV can be fun, entertaining and educational. It can also be violent or sexually explicit. Take the time to watch appropriate programs with your child and discuss what you see and hear. Encourage your child to comment on what he sees on TV.

If the child happens to be watching a TV program when a character is punched, kicked or shot, point out that in "real life" people are badly hurt by these things. Try asking questions like "How would you feel if that happened to you?" or "What do you think really happened?" They need to know that real violence is harmful.

With commercials, you might say "They sure make toys look better on TV. That toy truck can't really jump over all those rocks." When Superman jumps off a building, you might say "That was neat! How do you think they make it look like he's flying?" Encourage children to ask questions about stunts, special effects, and products that they see on TV.

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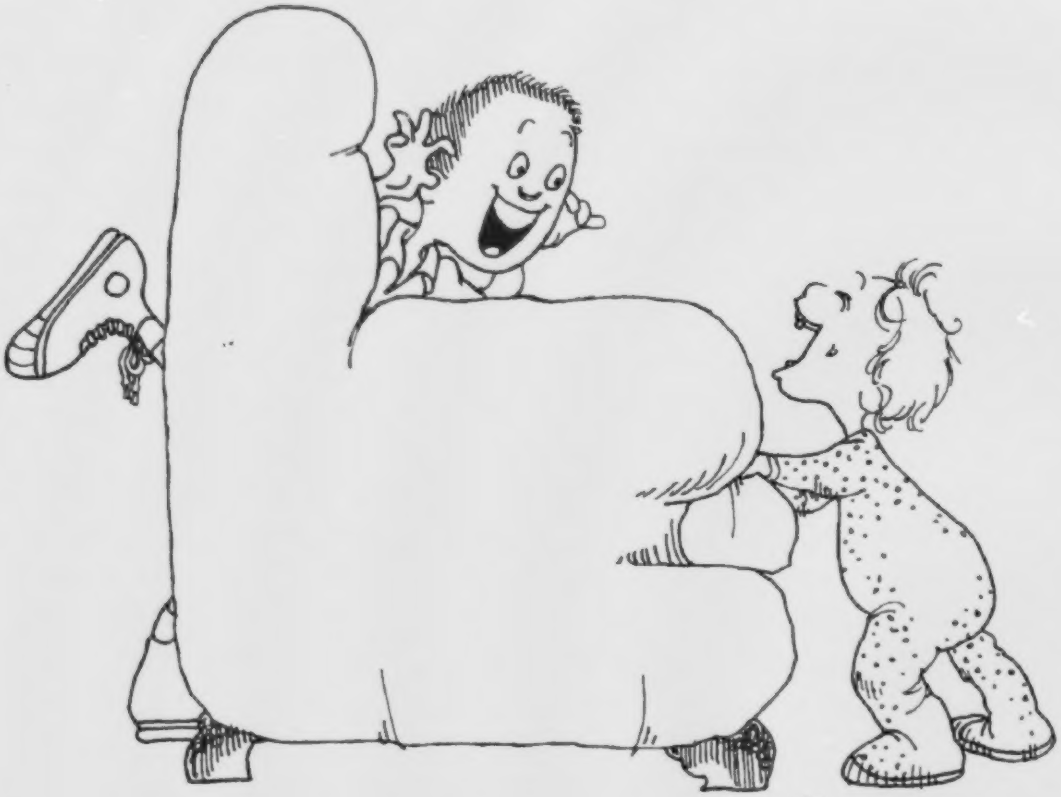
MODULE FOUR

More About Process of Thinking


Christine Tripp

Introduction

The topics in this module show how you can provide everyday opportunities to develop and enrich your child's thinking ability.

More About Process of Thinking Topics

Topic 18: Label
Topic 19: Categorize
Topic 20: Cause and Effect
Topic 21: Sequence
Topic 22: Prioritize
Topic 23: Fact and Opinion
Topic 24: Making Decisions

TOPIC 18

Label

Definition

Labelling is giving a name or description to an object or an idea that places it in a certain category.

Examples

- Babies hear parents naming objects daily, like bottle, toes, bath, bunny, Mom and Dad.
- Toddlers begin to label when they point at objects and ask "That?" The new words parents use add to their vocabulary.
- Preschoolers observe differences between each other and label them: "Has a tall Daddy." "Has a big sister." "Doesn't like milk." "Has a Spiderman lunchbox."
- Parents label when they introduce a new food, and say "Here is a peach. It tastes good!"

Key messages

- Labels help children to identify, organize, understand and remember information.
- One thing can have several labels.
- Some labels can limit our understanding and hurt other people.

About labelling

When children know the names for things, they can identify, organize, understand and remember the world around them. They can place people and things into categories based on their prior knowledge and apply this information to new experiences.

Some labels apply to characteristics that are evident, like male and female. Some apply to characteristics that may not be evident, like mother, singer, teacher, learning disabled. Labels can be harmful when they discriminate or insult.

At about 18 months, children begin a sort of naming explosion. They want to know the names of all kinds of objects, often pointing to them so that you can label, for example, tree, dog, girl, juice, crayon.

A preschooler is forming attitudes and values about the world, and the labels your child hears and sees will reflect these attitudes and values. If your preschooler sees a female fixing the sink, she will know that she can fix things. If your preschooler's favourite teacher in his child care program is a male, he will know that he can do that kind of job some day.

How does labelling affect children's lifelong learning?

Giving a name or label to something helps children build their vocabulary. Most early language and vocabulary development consists of labelling. It is also how we continue to develop our vocabulary as we get older.

Very young children sometimes notice differences between people, but they are a lot less likely than adults to judge someone based on those differences.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Sticky notes

To label something, you have to know enough language to give it a name. Categories will become clearer as children learn to label and as their experiences expand.

Play a name game with your child. Ask her "What's your name?" When she answers, print it on a sticky note and stick it on her.

Next, ask "What's my name?" The answer will probably be something like Mom, Dad, Nanny or Susan, depending on your relationship to the child. Print this "name" for yourself and have her stick it on you.

Ask your child what other names or labels she has. Model some examples, like "little girl" or a nickname. Think of other names for each other and stick them on.

You may want to talk with your child about names or labels that are untrue or hurtful. Some children are very sensitive to this and others.

TOPIC 19

Categorize

Definition

Categorizing is grouping things that are the same in some way.

Example

- A baby quickly learns to categorize faces into two groups — Mommy and not Mommy.
- A toddler puts toys into one category — Mine!
- A child learns to categorize other people — friends, family, strangers, caregivers.
- A child is allowed to choose a pet based on categories — small, furry, quiet, easy care.
- Parents can categorize activities as being safe or not safe for their children.

Key messages

- Things in a category are the same in some way.
- Things can go into more than one category.
- Putting things in categories helps children to remember and use information.
- Children's prior knowledge about things in a category helps them to understand new things that fit into the same category.

About categorizing

When we can put something into a category, we know a lot about it based on what we already know about that category. For example, if a building belongs in the category of "restaurants," we know that we can eat food there.

Sorting things into categories helps children to organize, remember and use information. If a child knows that a "lion" belongs in the category "cat," she will find she already knows many things about lions.

Infants are gathering information and checking people out all the time. A child who suddenly becomes shy around new people, or even people she doesn't see very often, is simply starting to categorize others as known and unknown. Think of it as a built-in safety feature. A little later, categorization helps children to form strong opinions about all kinds of things: "I hate green food." "Five-year-olds are big kids."

How does categorizing affect children's lifelong learning?

Categorization is important. It is directly linked to comprehension. To help understand what they are reading, children sort ideas into categories, for example, fact and opinion, relevant and irrelevant, "good guys" and "bad guys," true stories and fiction.

As children become more independent, categorization is essential for making appropriate choices, like knowing the difference between friends and strangers and things that can or cannot be eaten.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Toys

You'll discover many categorizing activities during your day-to-day routines with your child – sorting laundry, putting the dishes away, grocery shopping, sorting coins. This activity uses toys.

When it's time to tidy up, try categorizing toys as you and your child put them away. As you put things away, use language like "This toy goes in the toybox" or "on the shelf" or "in the bath toy bin." An older child might talk about categories on his own with a little encouragement. The important thing is to talk about them while doing the activity.

To show that things can belong to more than one group, encourage your child to think of other categories, like red toys, soft toys or toys that make sounds.

TOPIC 20

Cause and Effect

Definition

Cause and effect is a relationship where a condition or event makes another condition or event happen.

Examples

- If infants cry, they usually need to be changed, nursed, cuddled, burped or fed.
- Toddlers know that if they can reach the counter, they can get the cookie on it.
- 3-year-olds learn that if they wash their hands, the finger paint will come off.
- Parents know that when the baby gate is secure, their child is safe.

Key messages

- When children understand cause and effect, they gain more control over the choices they make.
- Children need to learn about cause and effect in an environment that is safe for free exploration.

About cause and effect

Understanding cause and effect begins at an early age. Babies learn that crying (the cause) means you will come and take care of their discomfort (the effect).

Later, understanding cause and effect gives children control over their choices. An extreme example is when a child touches a hot surface and is burned.

Young children need to test boundaries to learn about cause and effect to build their prior knowledge. This means trying everything from eating soap to opening doors just to see what will happen. A 4-year-old who is curious about touching a fish might decide to reach into the tank, because touching the fish is the most important thing at that time.

Control over choices leads to feelings of independence and self-confidence, and allows children to take part in setting their own limits. Adults can help by making the connection between the cause and the effect. Children need explanations and reminders. They also need to know what their options are. Often, children know what **not** to do, but don't know what they **can** do instead.

Cause and effect is also an important part of relationships between people. Learning what to say and do affects others and helps us to develop empathy and build friendships.

How does cause and effect affect children's lifelong learning?

Life is full of choices. When exploring the relationship between cause and effect, children are exploring possibilities, examining the possible causes of an effect and predicting the possible effects from a cause.

Cause and effect governs all choices we make in life. Allowing children to explore cause and effect allows them to understand the logical and natural consequences of what they do. From their successes and mistakes, they learn about what they can control in their lives. Allowing children to explore cause and effect also helps them to learn to make responsible choices for themselves and others.

When children go to school, they start to take responsibility for assignments, homework, study habits and behaviour. Knowing what you do today will affect what you do tomorrow is essential to planning ahead. Later, the ability to see cause and effect will be a valuable skill in the workplace.

Science, social studies, math and the arts are devoted to inquiring, exploring, discovering and making connections about cause and effect relationships.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Water play

Making sure your child is closely supervised, try some water play in the kitchen sink. Water is fun and easy to manipulate, creating lots of effects.

Fill the sink with water. Ask "I wonder what will happen if we pull out the plug?" Have your child pull it and watch. Reinforce the effect by saying "If you pull out the plug, the water goes down the drain."

Refill the sink. Let your child add some dish soap to the water. Ask "I wonder what will happen if you stir it?" Have him use a whisk or wooden spoon to froth up the bubbles. At this point, if your child hasn't already said it, say "If you stir the water, then it gets all bubbly!"

Children can cause more effects in the water with plastic cups, a sieve, rocks or a small watering can. They'll come up with lots of things to try. Keep pointing out the relationship between the cause and the effect.

Remember to always set safe boundaries for this activity.

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TOPIC 21

Sequence

Definition

Sequencing is ordering things or events so that one follows another.

Examples

- An infant's life is a series of routines or sequences: being hungry, being fed, being burped, being cuddled, being changed, being put down for a nap.
- A toddler learns to take off clothes before getting into the bathtub.
- A child gives Daddy a hard time for skipping pages in a favourite book because the sequence of the story has been interrupted.
- Preschoolers take turns on the slide: first Jamal, then Mark, then Chris, then Jamal again...
- Parents teach their children to brush their teeth in a sequence. First "Put the toothpaste on the brush." Second "Open your mouth." Third "Brush your teeth." Fourth "Rinse your mouth." Fifth "Rinse your mouth again." Sixth "Put the toothbrush away."

Key messages

- When one thing follows another, it is a sequence.
- It is important to use "first," "second," "third," etc. when talking about sequence with children.
- When things or events are in a sequence, there is not necessarily a cause and effect relationship.

About sequencing

Everything we do has a sequence. Words are placed in a particular sequence to make a sentence. Some things have to be done in a particular sequence, like opening our mouthes before brushing our teeth. Sometimes we have a choice in the order of things we do, like having the salad before or after the main course. Some things can be put in random sequence, like a list of things to do.

Understanding sequence helps us to remember and follow directions. Ordinal numbers (like "order") – first, second, third, fourth – are what we use to describe sequence. Cardinal numbers – 1, 2, 3, 4 –

which really mean an amount of something, are sometimes used as "shorthand" for ordinal numbers.

Stacking blocks is one way children begin to learn about sequence. A little later, preschoolers begin to follow two- or three-step directions, like "First, pick out a book you want to read together. Second, come and sit with me on the couch."

Children naturally develop an understanding of sequence by watching you (modelling) and through trial and error. Your 3-year-old might have to try buttoning his shirt several times before making the correct matches.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Getting dressed

When you're helping your child get dressed, it's a great opportunity to talk about and use the concept of sequencing together.

Lay out clothes so you can both see them. With a young child, you could say "First, put on your underwear. Second, put on your socks...," etc. With an older child, you could ask "What do you put on first?" "What do you put on second?"

The important part is to model using sequence and to let your child participate in deciding what the sequence should be. Watch for sequences in other daily routines and special events. Practically everything we do and say forms a sequence.

What are some sequences your child follows each day without even being taught?

How does sequencing affect children's lifelong learning?

Understanding and using sequence in our everyday lives helps us to do things more effectively and efficiently, no matter what our age. Following a sequence saves time and energy by organizing an activity into specific steps. Once we have done something a few times, the steps become automatic. We don't have to think about each part of a task. Being able to do something automatically allows us to do more than one thing at a time – for example, talking on the phone while getting dressed.

When we understand how words in a certain sequence form a sentence and how sentences and paragraphs in a certain sequence tell a story, we understand what we read. Sequence is a basic part of math and science, too. Imagine trying to do math if you did not understand the sequence of 1 to 10!

TOPIC 22

Prioritize

Definition

Prioritizing is putting objects, people, events or actions in order of importance.

Examples

- Infants' basic needs for food, sleep, comfort and love are top priority.
- Toddlers might grab a toy away from another child because having the toy at that moment is their priority.
- Preschoolers may begin to set priorities by choosing when to put on their pajamas – before or after brushing their teeth.
- Preschoolers understand that they have to wash their hands before eating.
- Many parents will have to choose between staying at home with their child if she is sick, or finding a caregiver.

Key messages

- There is a difference between prioritizing according to preference and according to importance.
- All people prioritize according to their own values, so your child might not share your priorities.

About prioritizing

How we set priorities is personal. It is based on our own values – on what we want or think is important. Sometimes what we want the most or like the best is not the most important. You might really want to go to a party tonight, but you don't have a babysitter. Of course, it's more important to stay home and look after your child than it is to go out.

When we prioritize, we use many thinking topics, like Predict, Cause and Effect, Sequence, and Making Decisions. We learn to put what is important (for us and for others) before what we want at the moment. Children prioritize differently from adults, but the basic skill is the same. Children who learn to prioritize are more able to make appropriate choices. Here is how children prioritize at various ages:

- For infants, almost every need is urgent, including feeding, cuddling, talking and playing.

- Toddlers prioritize themselves. When they say "Mine!" and "Me first!" they are letting you know that they have discovered their new, most important person — "Me."
- Preschoolers understand priorities if you explain the reason — "It's important to wash your hands after you use the bathroom because it keeps the germs away and keeps us healthy."

How does prioritizing affect children's lifelong learning?

Different people have different priorities. What's important to you might not be important to others. When priorities are in conflict with other people, we usually negotiate and compromise to reach a good decision for everyone.

Often, we have a conflict of priorities within ourselves. For example, sometimes we choose to do the housework before settling in with the latest copy of a favourite magazine. This type of prioritizing is important as we get older, because it allows us to make decisions based on what's important to us.

We can also prioritize someone else's needs ahead of our own, like when we donate money to a charity.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Choosing snacks

Set out three nutritious snack foods (enough for you and your child), like apple slices, carrot sticks and crackers. Let your child choose the one she wants to eat first. Ask "Which one do you want to eat first?" "Which one do you like the best?"

Then, let her eat her second choice, then her third choice. Your child has just prioritized based on her preference. Share your preferences, for example, by saying "I like the apple the best because it tastes sweet" or "I pick the cracker first because it's crunchy."

Prioritizing in the above activity is based on preference.

Other priorities are based upon importance. For example, children want to do things they like to do, but sometimes they are not aware of the dangers involved. When a child is about to ride a tricycle across the street, say something like "I know you like to ride your tricycle. But I do not want you to ride it across the street because you could get hit by a car and hurt. It's more important for you to be safe and stay in the driveway."

TOPIC 23

Fact and Opinion

Definition

A fact is a statement that can be proven true. An opinion is a personal belief or judgement about something.

Example

- Babies recognize their parents' voices in the room.
- Toddlers may go through a period of wanting to eat only one or two "favourite" foods.
- A 3-year-old wants to choose her own clothes and won't wear certain things.
- A preschooler knows it's not safe to play in the road.
- An adult knows that a spider has eight legs. Some adults are of the opinion that spiders are scary.

Key messages

- There is a difference between fact and opinion.
- There are ways to encourage children to learn facts and form opinions.
- The more facts children have, the better they are able to develop informed opinions.

About fact and opinion

Discovering facts is a child's job and joy. Encourage children to distinguish between fact and opinion, and to think independently. Confusing facts and opinions can limit learning.

It's okay to challenge facts. Most of what we see, hear and read about comes through someone else's personal filter, which is based on their values and beliefs. When you encourage your children to ask questions, you are encouraging them to find out the difference between fact and opinion.

Forming opinions is part of developing each child's unique personality. Children and parents don't always share the same opinions, for example, when bedtime should be and what foods taste good. However, believing another person's opinion without questioning it prevents children from finding things out for themselves. Opinions that discriminate against others, like racism, sexism and homophobia, can be very harmful.

How does understanding fact and opinion affect children's lifelong learning?

Opinions are not right or wrong. They reflect what we know – the facts – combined with our values and beliefs. The values and beliefs of parents, siblings, friends, teachers, co-workers and peers influence us. We then form our own opinions.

Much of the reading children do in school is fact-based. Many assignments ask students to look for answers to "fact" questions. To fully comprehend what you read, you need to be able to tell the difference between fact and opinion. You also need to check your facts by questioning, reading more, and getting information through personal experience.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Asking for facts and opinions

Many children like to pick out their own clothes. When your child chooses something, ask him the facts about that piece of clothing, "What colour is it?" "How does it feel?" "Is it warm?"

Then ask for his opinion, "Do you like it?" "What do you like best about it?" "Is it your favourite?" Be prepared to let him wear what he's picked out!

Try this with food, books, toys, people, animals, music and just about anything else. Point out facts, express your own opinions and ask for your children's opinions when you read, watch TV or talk together.

TOPIC 24

Making Decisions

Definition

Making decisions means making a choice based on your prior knowledge, values and thinking strategies.

Example

- Babies prefer to be held by their mother because this fufils two of their basic needs — for food and for love.
- Toddlers decide to eat their carrots and throw their peas on the floor because orange is better than green.
- 3-year-olds choose a stuffed animal to take to bed based on cuddliness and familiarity.
- 5-year-olds decide who to invite to their birthday party, what games to play and what kind of cake they want.
- Adults help their children choose what to wear based on the weather and what they will be doing.

Key messages

- You can give your children opportunities to make age-appropriate choices.
- You can model the decision-making process by example and by thinking out loud.
- You can coach your children in the decision-making process when it's appropriate.

About making decisions

Making decisions is a part of daily life. Children need lots of practice making good choices and decisions, starting when they are very young.

Decisions have consequences, either positive or negative. Even a decision as simple as deciding to wear your blue socks today means that you can't wear your green socks. With practice, over time, your child learns to make effective decisions that have positive consequences.

Toddlers make decisions based on their likes and dislikes. It's more of a response than a process. Later, you can give your children opportunities to make age-appropriate choices, like what to give as a birthday gift for a friend or what to take to school for snacktime. This gives children a sense of control over their life.

A 5-year-old who wants to wear brand new shoes outside in snowy weather is ready to learn some decision-making skills. Remind her of what she already knows – it is cold and snowy outside. Point out the possible consequences the shoes could be ruined, she could get sick. Does she still want to wear them?

How does making decisions affect children's lifelong learning?

Children will be making decisions all their lives. When you model and guide the process of decision making, they develop the ability to make decisions for themselves.

Children who feel confident about making age-appropriate choices are likely to be able to make effective decisions that satisfy their needs and have positive consequences throughout life. The sense of control that comes from making decisions is essential to high self-esteem and life management.

ACTIVITY
to do with children

Making an important decision

This activity can serve as a model for coaching your child through the decision-making process.

Choose a situation in which the outcome is important to your child and involve her in the decision-making process. Choosing a pet, planning a birthday party, selecting clothes or deciding which toy to buy are great times to practise making decisions together.

Use prior knowledge. Talk with your child. What does she already know? Brainstorm about what she might want.

Gather new information. Find out as much as possible about the choice, for example, cost, care, and everything else you need to know, from books and the Internet, friends and stores.

Consider attitudes and values. What is your child's attitude? What can she take care of herself?

Use thinking strategies. Model and encourage your child to ask questions, compare and contrast, prioritize, and predict the effects that might result from making a particular choice. Afterwards, talk about whether or not it was a good choice.

MODULE FIVE

Language Development

Christine Tripp

Introduction

The ability to communicate using language is unique to humans. Language is a tool for thinking and for sharing our thoughts with others, and it can be learned only through interaction with others at a very early age. From birth to about age 4, a child's brain is especially receptive to learning language. It is important that children receive lots of language stimulation during these early years when the brain is ready to acquire language so easily.

The topics in this module give you an overview of how and when language develops. They also provide you with many ideas and activities to do with children to enhance their use of language.

Language development topics

Topic 25: Communication
Topic 26: Important Factors
Topic 27: How Language Develops
Topic 28: Parent's Role in Language
Topic 29: Connecting with Children

TOPIC 25

Communication

Definition

Communication is any way of relating to another person to convey or receive a message.

Examples

- Babies cry to communicate that their diaper is wet and uncomfortable.
- Toddlers let you know they don't like certain food by throwing their bowl on the floor.
- Preschoolers ask to be taken to the bathroom.
- Preschoolers discuss what colour of blocks to use to make their castle.
- You hug your child.

Key messages

- Talking is only one way of communicating.
- Communication can be verbal or non-verbal.
- Non-verbal communication includes gestures, facial expressions, body language, writing and symbols.

Information about communication

We communicate from the moment we are born. There are two ways to communicate, verbal and non-verbal. Both are equally important.

When we think of communication, we tend to focus on language, but we all communicate in ways that do not always involve talking – over 90% of face-to-face communication is non-verbal (Wainwright,1993). The silent messages of body language often reveal more than the spoken word in conveying true feelings or attitudes.

Adults communicate messages to children using the language of gestures, facial expressions, eye movements, and so on. It is important that children receive positive messages that foster a sense of self-worth and a value of learning.

Children communicate to have their basic physical, social, emotional, mental and spiritual needs met. Adults can foster self-worth, healthy relationships and enhance skill development by helping to develop their children's communication and language skills.

Crying is an infant's way of communicating that they need something, like food or a diaper change. Toddlers experiment with body language, checking the effect of different gestures, noises and faces on adults and other children. They are practising their communication skills.

Children are very direct in their communication. Sometimes they say things that may unintentionally embarrass you or others. Remember, they are simply expressing what they observe. If this happens, you may want to talk to them about the best time to tell you things they notice about people.

How does communication affect children's lifelong learning?

The ability to give and receive messages is essential to learning. Children who are encouraged to communicate and share their needs, thoughts and feelings learn that they can influence their environment. The sense of security fostered by healthy, reciprocal communication between adults and children allows children to feel safe to explore and learn about their world.

Communication is an exchange of ideas, feelings and information. In school and in the workplace, a person who feels confident will communicate more effectively with friends, colleagues and teachers. This in turn builds even greater confidence and the individual is motivated to learn more.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Charades

Try this game of "charades" with your child. Think of a message you want to give your child. The message should include an action, such as "Let's go for a walk" or "Let's read a book."

Now, play "charades." Convey the message without talking. Use body movements, facial expressions, etc. If this doesn't work, try pointing at things or picking them up.

See if your child can show that he understands your message. How effective was your message? What could you have done to communicate more clearly? How does this relate to the life of a young child?

TOPIC 26

Important Factors

Definition

Important factors involved in language development include:

- Children need others to learn to talk.
- Language is learned through imitation and in conversation.
- The three main goals of language development are to communicate, to learn about and make sense of the world, and to express feelings and thoughts.
- The four main influencers of language development are:
  - the brain is "pre-wired" to learn language
  - thinking
  - social environment
  - physical environment
- The four main components of language are
  - phonology (awareness of the sounds and sound patterns of our language)
  - syntactics (grammar)
  - semantics (meaning)
  - pragmatics (usage: knowing what language to use with different people)

Examples

- Infants start to mimic what they hear as a first step to sounding out words.
- Young children develop vocabulary as they participate in different experiences.
- Parents naturally "teach" their children language as they interact.

Key messages

- Learning language is a natural process.
- Several key factors are involved in learning a language.
- We depend on others to learn a language.

About important factors in language development

Children need others to learn to talk: Children's language develops through involvement in their world. Language is such a natural part of our daily lives that it's easy for parents to play an active role in their children's language development. Adults are natural models for children's learning.

Language is learned through imitation and conversation: Much of language learning happens when children imitate their parents. Parents teach in two ways: by direct instruction and through modelling where the child imitates the parent. One of the most natural and effective ways of fostering language development in young children is by engaging them in conversation.

Children attempt to communicate with their parents from birth by using eye contact, body language, sounds and then words. Some conversation strategies are learned best when modelled over time by adults who are good at it. Turn taking, listening, participating, eye contact, body language, knowing the various kinds of conversation for different situations, and using different words are all conversation strategies.

Specific ways that adults can help to teach and model the "art" of conversation are included in Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development (Topic 33).

The three main goals of language development are to communicate, and to learn about and make sense of the world, and to express feelings and thoughts: From birth, children need to belong, feel loved and to express their feelings and ideas. They must be able to communicate their feelings, ideas and thoughts to learn effectively. They need language to do this. Young children are constantly exploring and learning about the world using all their senses. Language allows them to name their discoveries and to understand how one thing is related to another. At a very early age, children use language to help understand and share ideas.

Four main factors that influence language are:

1. **Our brains are "pre-wired" to learn language**
   Children are born with the capacity for language.

2. **Thinking**
   Thinking skills are necessary to learn words and their meanings, to use words, and to express thoughts and ideas.

3. **Social environment**
   Children need to socialize to develop language. They need to have other people to listen to, talk with, imitate, and explore and reinforce their attempts.

4. **Physical environment**
   Children's physical surroundings influence language development. Varied physical environments provide many opportunities

for children to see, hear, smell, touch and taste – in other words, to experience the world.

Four main components of language

1. Phonology

Phonology is an awareness of the sounds of language. Very early on, children pay attention to the sound patterns in speech. They hear rhythm in language as they listen to people talk to them, read to them, tell stories, sing songs, and recite poems, riddles and jingles. They notice that some words have certain sound patterns or begin with the same sound and enjoy hearing phrases like "Wee Willy Winkie."

Most children become aware of sounds in a natural way through conversation, rhymes, word play and riddles. Awareness of the sound patterns of our language and of speech sounds is an important bridge between speaking and reading.

Adults can help children develop the skills necessary for reading success by playing with sounds and words, for example, making rhymes. Research tells us that children who have a well-developed awareness and recognition of sound patterns are well on the way to becoming good readers and spellers (Griffin and Olson, 1992). It is important for adults to be aware of this and the role phonology plays in later reading development.

You can help your children by:

- reading to them often and paying attention to the sounds of speech as you read
- choosing books that have rhymes and speech-sound play, and stressing the words that rhyme when you read
- playing word or rhyming games, using riddles and tongue twisters, and singing songs
- bringing different sounds to your child's attention by repeating rhymes, stressing sounds, and having fun with the many sound patterns of language

2. Semantics

Semantics refers to the meaning of words. Children learn the meaning of words in the context of their experiences, by using all their senses. They learn about worms – long worms, short worms and fat worms – as they play with them. It's important to provide children with as many opportunities as possible to explore the world and to use all their senses.

3. Syntactics

Syntactics refers to rules that apply to the structure of a language – how it is put together. Children learn about the correct use of grammar rules, or syntax, by listening to appropriate conversation. It is important for adults to model grammatically correct language in a natural way.

4. Pragmatics

Pragmatics refers to appropriate language to use in specific situations. For example, when children learn the correct rules of conversation, they learn how to speak formally (with some adults) and informally (with friends).

How do important factors in language development affect children's lifelong learning?

Adults who help children learn to listen and learn language are helping them to become efficient readers, writers and spellers.

People naturally attempt to communicate with others. As babies listen, they try to use eye contact, gestures, noise, sounds and finally words to get their message across to others. The development of speech and language is a natural outgrowth of listening to and imitating the speech and language of others. The development of reading and writing is an extension of this need to communicate and learn about our world.

TOPIC 27

How Language Develops

Definition

Language development is the process of learning to listen, use body language, speak, read and write.

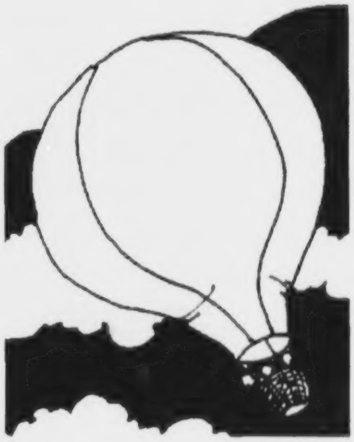
Examples

- Babies notice and listen to the sounds of their world parents' voices, noises around the home, and music. (*listen*)
- From the time they are born, children watch people. The ability to "read" people is an essential life skill. Infants don't have the verbal language to communicate what they want. They rely on gestures and expressions to get their point across. (*body language*)
- From their first cry, children want to express themselves. They have a natural desire to communicate needs and feelings. (*speak*)
- As children learn to develop their listening and speaking skills, they are also beginning to communicate with others through reading and writing. (*read and write*)

Listening, using body language, speaking, reading and writing do not happen sequentially. They all overlap.

Key messages

- Language develops from birth.
- There is "language" even before real words.
- Learning to talk usually follows a pattern.
- Grammar (the way we put our words together) develops in stages.
- Vocabulary and word meaning can be developed.



About how language develops

The following is based on information from *The Developing Child* (Bee, 1992).

1. There is "language" before real words
In the first 2 to 4 months, infants can pay attention to and tell the difference between many sound patterns. This means that they can hear the difference between "m" as in mommy and "d" as in daddy. They also pay attention to and can tell differences in intonations. This means they hear the difference between a happy voice and a cross voice.

In the first 2 months, infants make pleasurable cooing sounds as their first words. At 6 to 7 months, they produce both vowel and consonant sounds, like "baba" and "dada." Infants soon begin to become aware of the rhythm of language. They make patterns of sound by imitating the sounds and rhythms of conversation, learning the "tune" of language before the words.

At 8 to 9 months, infants use gestures to demand things, moving their arms, throwing things, pointing, kicking their feet and making faces. They learn the rhythm of language through hand clapping, bouncing on your knee and singing songs, being held in your arms, and rocking while you sing.

Between 9 and 11 months, infants can hear and recognize individual words and understand their meaning. However, they are probably not able to speak many of the words they understand. The average receptive vocabulary of a 13-month-old is about 50 words.

2. Learning to talk
Between 7 and 13 months, meaningful words gradually replace "babbling." Remember, they still can't speak all the words they understand.

Ninety-five percent of all toddlers have spoken their first word by the time they are 15 months old. During this period, they grasp that language is symbolic words are names for things. This means that parents no longer have to point to a dog and say "See the doggie." Toddlers themselves will point and say "doggie."

Most children focus on learning nouns first and a few verbs. Out of 50 words, only five or six will be verbs. The rest will be nouns, sprinkled with one or two pronouns. Some children start with words that focus on social relationships. They include words like I, you, me, no, yes and want.

The growth of their vocabulary is slow until children learn about 30 words. After the first 30 words are learned, they learn between 10 and 30 words a week. By the time children are 6 years old, they know between 10,000 and 14,000 words. Who do you think taught them most of the words? You their most important teacher!

3. Early grammatical development
Grammar is the pattern of language. It is about where we put words when we speak and write, and what the correct words are. Grammar develops in two stages:

Stage 1 – Children develop patterns early on to make sense of language. Between 18 and 24 months on average, children put word and gestures or two words together to make their first sentence. When children begin to make sentences, they may not use plurals or verb tenses. So children may say, "See bird" or "Me jump."

In the early stages of making sentences, a single sentence can mean many different things. "Me go" can mean the child wants to go to the toilet, to bed or to play.

Stage 2 – Use of plurals, tenses and articles begins. Children begin to put "s" on words to make plurals, so that "dog" becomes "dogs." They use "ed" with verbs for past tenses, so that "jump" becomes "jumped." Children sometimes generalize this new knowledge at first and use "ed" in inappropriate ways, for example, "getted," "goed" and "sitted." This is a sign that they are exploring and discovering language.

During this stage, children begin to use "the" and "a" in sentences. Who, what, where, when, why and how questions also begin. This is a sign that children are practising the patterns of language. They have questions about everything!

Children are learning up to 10 words a day and have to ask questions so they can remember them.

The use of negatives begins. Children figure out the pattern for saying what they don't want. The word "no," which has been a word or gesture, is replaced by a negative sentence. When toddlers don't want to give someone a toy, they might say, "Can't have it!" instead of just "No!" Sometimes, they may not get the order of the words right, such as "Can't it have!"

4. Later grammatical development

Children make giant strides in grammatical development from birth to 5 years old. Adults do not necessarily teach language directly. Instead, they lead children to language through thousands and thousands of language experiences. When children begin to learn to read, they use the language patterns they have learned. If these patterns have not been internalized, reading is difficult because children cannot tell if something "sounds right" when they read it without these important clues.

5. Development of word meaning

What comes first - learning the word, or understanding its meaning? Actually, they often both happen at the same time. What is important for understanding word meaning is for the child to "experience" the word. For example, touching water, seeing a car, eating a popsicle.

6. Categorization

Once children can see that things have something in common, they can begin to categorize. Rather than learning thousands of isolated words, they make connections between those that have something in common. For example, shoe, sneaker, boot and sock are grouped into the category of "things people put on their feet." Once children understand this concept, a vocabulary explosion begins.

7. Learning pragmatics

Learning about pragmatics – what language to use in specific situations – and the rules of conversation begins at birth. Children know the essentials of language by the time they are 18 months old. By this time, children know that the goal of language is to communicate and they can adapt their language to different situations and different people. Children as young as 2 years old may say "Mine!" to another toddler, but may say "More apple?" to an adult.

How information about how language develops affects lifelong learning?

Because language is one of the major means by which ideas are shared and information gained, it is basic to living and learning. The degree to which a person is able to understand and use language has a direct impact on that person's ability to think, solve problems, communicate, read and write. In other words, we need language to learn effectively.

It is important that parents have a knowledge of the components of language and what is involved in language development. An awareness of the stages of language development allows you to effectively monitor your child's early speech and language. This awareness will help determine if there is a need to provide extra help or to request the assistance of a speech-language pathologist.

Children are "pre-wired" to learn language. During the very early years, speech and language patterns are quickly becoming established. The "language brain" is ready and eager to learn new sounds, sound patterns and words. These early language patterns are the building blocks that provide the foundation for future language development. Thus, it is important that these patterns are appropriate ones to allow for later language learning and learning in general.

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TOPIC 28

Parents' Role in Language Development

Definition

Parents' role in language development is to model appropriate communication strategies on how to speak and listen.

Example

The following are examples of when you can effectively model appropriate language:

- Daily routines. For example, eating routines, story-reading routines, bedtime routines, games and shopping routines.
- Things that interest your child. For example, if she is exploring flowers, talk about flowers, touch and smell them together, examine and label the parts.
- First experiences. For example, when he is looking at something for the first time, explore the item together, look for different uses and talk about it. Use new vocabulary that is associated with the object.
- Misusing words. When children are experimenting with language, they try many ways to use and say words. It's a good time to try different ways of using and saying words, showing the child how to use a word, even playing games with words.

Key messages

- Parents and other adults are essential for children's language development.
- Language development happens over time.
- Children experience language through imitation, interpretation and expansion.
- Children need to first hear words, phrases and sentences being used correctly and appropriately before they are able to use them correctly themselves.

About parents' role in language development

Although they do not teach language directly, parents are models for language development. Children need to hear and speak a language over time to learn it. Unless children have heard sounds and words, understand how they are used and then practise saying them, they can't learn the language. By the time children are 24 months old, they have learned most of the basics of a language, usually from their parents.

Imitation – Children learn by imitation. They imitate sounds (words), people (role playing) and things (playing dinosaur). A child says, "baw" and the parent takes the ball and says "ball." The child says, "baw" and the parent again says "ball." Sometimes, a child has to imitate a word many times before he can learn it.

Interpretation – Young children are trying to figure out language every day. The hundreds of questions children ask are a way of saying, "Help me figure out what's going on." You can help by interpreting or explaining things.

Expansion – As children's vocabulary expands, so does their understanding of the different ways they think about and use the same word. Parents can help expand the understanding of words. To children, the word "cat" might be all furry things, their pet cat only, or all black creatures. Parents can expand on the word "cat" by talking about cats and having the child experience them in different real-life situations or in books.

How does parents' role in language development affect children's lifelong learning?

Children are born with a desire to learn language. They start working on it right away by observing their world. Children who can safely and happily investigate the world inside their home develop a natural curiosity about the outside world of friends, school and community.

When natural curiosity is encouraged, a sense of trust and risk taking develops that tends to promote investigation and learning.

Parents can play an active role in fostering such investigation by providing opportunities to explore, such as walks, excursions and other family activities. Such activities stimulate thinking and develop vocabulary when you talk about what's going on at the same time. These activities also allow children to question and understand the world.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

Breakfast time

Your child is sitting in his chair in the kitchen. It's 7:00 a.m. You have to get ready for work. He has eaten, but you haven't. Out comes the cereal, milk, sugar, spoon, jam, bread, bowl, butter and knife.

Provide the learning opportunity by giving your child a plastic bowl, a spoon and maybe the cereal box to play with while you make your breakfast. As you do so, talk about what you are doing and what he is doing.

Allow your child to lead the learning. Start eating and observe as your child points to the different things you're eating. You pick each item up and say what it is. If it's appropriate, you let your child experience the food or item that he wants to explore. Watch to see what he's doing and comment on what's happening.

Teach your child directly by modelling. Say, "Here is my bowl." (Pick it up.) As you pour the cereal, say "I am going to have some cereal. Dad is going to put the cereal in the bowl." As you show him the jar of jam, you could say, "Daddy is putting jam on his toast." Remember, the more senses we use, the more we remember. Keep this informal conversation going while you eat.

Language Learning

- hearing words attached to things
- exploring things attached to words
- attaching meaning to eating
- using body language (gestures)
- repeating words and sounds
- hearing words in the context of a story (the story of eating breakfast with Dad)

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe = watching Dad
Categorize = things used at breakfast
Label = cereal, toast

Pasta art!

You are preparing pasta for lunch.

Provide – Give your child a handful of uncooked pasta.

Allow – Encourage her to make pictures and faces on the table.

Teach – Invite her to talk about the pictures and faces she has made. Encourage her by asking questions. Talk about the pasta shapes. For example, "Round pasta makes good eyes!"

Language Learning

- using pictures to visualize a story
- associating objects with their name
- telling and hearing stories
- attaching meaning to shapes
- adult feedback on story creation

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Sequence = first this happened, then this
Decisions = making the picture
Opinion = this is the best pasta picture ever!

The sound of music

Your child is on the kitchen floor while you are getting dinner ready.

Provide – You take out a few plastic bowls and a few spoons and put them on the floor. You casually name each one as you hand it to your child.

Allow – First the bowls go on her head, then they go inside one another. The bowls are tasted and sat on. Then she picks up the spoons.

Teach – You sit down on the kitchen floor and pick up a spoon. You hit a bowl. She hits a bowl. You play "Baa Baa Black Sheep," tapping out the rhythm, words and sounds with the bowl and spoon. Have fun together for a few minutes and let your child continue "making music" when you continue to get dinner ready.

Language Learning

- naming objects
- using instruments to make sounds
- hearing words repeated in a rhythm
- hearing the rhythm of language
- multisensory language learning

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Pattern = rhythm
Cause/Effect = If I hit the bowl, it makes a sound.
Predict = What will happen if I hit the bowl?

TOPIC 29

Connecting with Children

Definition

Connecting with your children refers to the "affective" or feeling area of learning. This emotional connection plays a key role in language development and learning in general.

Examples

- Patting a child on the back shows that you are aware of him and that you enjoy his presence.
- Listening to a child's questions and responding to her answers shows her that you are interested in her ideas.
- Sharing your own childhood experiences with your child shows him that you understand what it's like to be a child.

Key messages

- Connecting shows that you value your child as a person, you are interested in what he feels and thinks, and that his opinions and ideas are important.
- The degree to which a parent connects with a child emotionally has a direct relationship on the child's feelings of self-worth, self-confidence and self-esteem.

About connecting with children

The key role of parents is in the "affective" or feeling area of learning. It's about the attitudes and values we have about each person, place and thing we come into contact with.

Parents explain the world to their children. How children feel about and connect to things is partly determined by what a parent teaches about any person, place, thing or idea. The connections that parents help children make in the early years often chart their course for life.

What connections would your children make?

sharing reading = eagerness (or apprehension?)
jumping into a pool = confidence (or fear?)
eating vegetables = yummy (or yucky?)
helping with the chores = belonging (or resentment?)

Language is a fundamental way in which children connect with others. As a general rule, the greater the parent and child connection, the greater the opportunities for language development.

How does connecting with children affect their lifelong learning?

The emotional connections between parent and child teach the child to trust, take risks, solve problems, have confidence, relate to others, feel secure to ask questions and explore the world. Children who do not have positive connections to a significant adult may be in danger of not developing these lifelong skills which are essential for learning and forming relationships (Rasminsky, 1999).

ACTIVITIES to do with children

Mimi's day

Dinner's over! Everyone is watching TV. Mimi toddles up and climbs onto her mother's knee. Mother looks at Mimi and says, "Let's go into the kitchen and have a talk about your day."

Provide - Mom is providing Mimi with an opportunity to get to know her as someone who appreciates her and knows that she has something important to say. Mimi hears adult language spoken directly to her, one-on-one.

Allow - By asking about Mimi's day, Mom is able to listen to Mimi's language and extend it by asking questions and making comments.

Teach - Mom is passing on certain attitudes and values by leaving the TV and talking to Mimi. She is modelling behaviour that teaches important concepts.

Examples of the process of thinking and language development connection:

Asking questions = Ask about each other's day.
Sequence = What happened first, second, next in Mimi's day?
Compare and Contrast = How were Mimi and Mom's days alike and different?

Frustration happens

You have had a really hard day. You arrive home and your 3-year-old and 5-year-old run to meet you. They are pointing at each other and shouting "He did it! He did it!" Your partner gives you that "You don't want to see this" look. You go to the kitchen and on the floor are the remains of one of your best plates. You start raising your voice at the children and your partner. Then you realize that you sound like the children. You stop, count to 10, say you're sorry, and ask what happened.

Provide - Home is a natural learning environment. Children watch us very closely. You are giving instructions for life to your children every day. They look to adults to help them figure out how to behave in various real-life situations.

Allow – Children have to learn how to behave in all kinds of stressful situations. They should not be sheltered from daily family situations because that's how they learn about life. They need to experience real life through the family before they enter the outside world.

Teach – Learning does not have to be all smiles and hugs. Life is full of surprises and frustrations. It is normal to lose your cool once in a while. What you do about it lets your child know you. If you manage it well, then you have taught him that you get angry, but you can handle it. The learning is even more effective if you take a few minutes to talk about what happened and why.

The child learns about the parent

Dad's behaviour = What did he do before Mom got home?
Mom's behaviour = While she was shouting? After she stopped shouting?
What happened? = Children are seeing that Mom wants to know the facts, not to blame.

Examples of the process of thinking and language connection

Predict = What is Mom's reaction going to be?
Cause/Effect = What is the effect of breaking the dish?
Fact and Opinion = What really happened?
Point of view = "He did it!" and "You don't want to see this."
Question = What really happened?

MODULE SIX

More About Language Development

Christine Tripp

Introduction

Language development begins very early. Communication begins with the first cuddle and coo. Reading and writing and all later literacy is based on those early interactions between child and caregiver. This module elaborates on how this process takes place and provides strategies you can use to further enhance your child's language development.

More About Language Development Topics

Topic 30: Early Listening and Speaking
Topic 31: Early Reading
Topic 32: Early Writing
Topic 33: Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development

TOPIC 30

Early Listening and Speaking

Definition

Early listening is the ability of children at a young age to hear different sounds and sound patterns, distinguish different sounds correctly, and understand and interpret what they hear.

Examples

- Babies recognize their mother's voice.
- Toddlers begin to use words and phrases to ask for what they want.

Key messages

- The brain is "pre-wired" to learn language and to communicate.
- The role of parents is to provide stimulation and appropriate opportunities for language development.

About early listening and speaking

Many people cannot read or write but are still excellent communicators. A few centuries ago, most people could not read or write but were effective speakers. Speaking and listening are common language tools for all of us. Parents instinctively know how to provide a natural environment where speaking and listening develop. Rather than formally teaching, parents provide an environment that allows learning to happen.

Very early on, children want to tell others what they are experiencing. They depend on parents to provide the language. Parents provide language not only through words, but through body language, gestures, facial expressions, sounds and reactions. Think of the smiles and hugs that reward that first attempt at making sounds. Even though babies may not at first connect the sounds they made with a real object or person, continued reinforcement helps make connections. Then, sounds like "dada" become a real word with real meaning.

In the first 30 months, children understand most sounds and have figured out the fundamentals of listening. The hours of modelling speaking and listening, providing experiences and allowing children to learn naturally pay off. Then, children begin to develop and use language at an incredible rate. By providing a rich language-learning environment, adults can provide the key that unlocks the doors to children's speaking and listening.

How does early listening and speaking affect children's lifelong learning?

The ability to communicate affects every aspect of a person's life. As the TALK model shows, language is essential for any learning or problem solving.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

A walk in the woods

It is a sunny fall day and between loads of washing you decide to take Jessie, age 3, and Rhonda, age 18 months, for a walk in the nearby park.

Provide The outdoors is a child's learning laboratory. Rhonda hears a dog bark and is excited. She makes a sound each time the dog barks. You repeatedly say, "Yes, that is a dog. The dog is barking. It sounds like a 'woof, woof.'" Of course, a dog doesn't really say "woof, woof," but that's close enough and you're modelling vowel and consonant sounds and providing a context for your child to say a word.

Jessie walks in the dried leaves and hears the sounds they make. You listen closely to the sound and decide to listen for other sounds of birds, the wind, nearby traffic, the trees creaking. You are teaching Jessie the beginnings of active listening – that is, being aware of sounds and sound patterns.

Allow You watch as Jessie and Rhonda experience the park. You head in directions you know will provide stimulation, but you don't interfere.

Teach You mimic animal sounds and watch as the children run to find where the sound came from. You answer questions, not just with a "yes" or a "no", but extend the language. As you explain about the bark of a tree and Jessie asks questions about it, Rhonda listens closely, touches the bark and also learns about her world.

The favourite story

It's bed time, and time for shared reading. Your child snuggles into bed and you start to read. "Stop," comes the command, "Not that one!" As you have done so many times before, you get the book which is the current favourite and prepare to read it for the 500th time! You begin, your child riveted on your every word. You are tired and decide to skip a page. "You missed some," he tells you at once. Your child is practising active listening.

Provide – Children love to hear a favourite story over and over. It is an opportunity for a different kind of speaking and listening because the child knows the book so well. You are providing an environment that lets your child use his prior knowledge to chime in with words, phrases and sentences that he has memorized. You can provide opportunities to use the book to make up a parallel story or a different ending, talk about the qualities of each character, draw pictures about the book, have the child read part of the book and introduce other books about the same topic or by the same author.

Allow – Shared reading is a time to allow the child to express his thoughts. Children will often want to talk about things that are off topic. See these as opportunities to let your child take the lead. His motivation to explore with you is a wonderful time for some powerful learning and teaching.

Teach – Remember the goal of shared reading at this age – enjoyment! When parents read with their children, they may want to focus on teaching reading. However, the way to increase reading potential at this age is through the development of speaking and listening strategies. Children learn the skills of reading through the prior knowledge they have about speaking and listening, as well as information about people, animals and things in the world around them.

TOPIC 31

Early Reading

Definition

Early reading is the first step in using language to read printed words.

Examples

- Children recognize your facial expressions and read your body language.
- The infant in the crib looks at mobiles that have a pattern.
- The young child hears stories about the family history.
- A parent reads to her child.
- The child asks questions and more questions and you answer them patiently.
- While visiting the grocery store, dad points to the labels and names them out loud.

Key messages

- You can help in the process of learning to read from the time children are born.
- Any interaction with your child is an opportunity to teach early reading skills.
- Lots of interaction with your children can help them learn to read.

About early reading

Reading begins at birth. Children read your body language, hear the sounds of your voice and begin to form impressions about the world – all skills they will use when they meet words in print.

To eventually read printed words, children need opportunities to hear and use sounds, sound patterns and oral language, have prior knowledge about different things and be able to think. All of these requirements are already beginning to develop during the first weeks of life.

The more children do, the more language they will acquire. You can help children learn to read by providing things for them to do and talk about, allowing them to lead their learning, and teaching by modelling or directly giving words or adding new ones.

Any activity gives children a chance to hear and use language, opportunities to think (sort, label, look for patterns, sequence, predict, compare and contrast, question, form opinions, understand cause and effect, make decisions) and learn about their world.

How does early reading affect children's lifelong learning?

Early reading activities, such as listening, speaking, exploring the world, thinking and developing positive attitudes toward reading, set the stage for all later, more formal experiences with print.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

Sharing a picture book

You and your 4-year-old are cuddled up on the couch together. He wants to share a book with you.

Provide You have a selection of picture books that you have picked out together.

Allow You allow your child to choose the book he wants to share with you. He passes you the book right side up and opens it to the first page. He wants to turn the pages as you read. He shows that he understands about books – that they tell a story, that you read them from front to back and from top to bottom, that the marks on the page have meaning, and that reading is fun. Listen to what he has to say and talk about the pictures.

Teach – Enrich his learning by reminding him of what he already knows about this topic, by making your own comments about the pictures, by asking him what might happen next, and by comparing the book to his own experiences.

Learning About Reading

- Your child learns new words and their meanings as you discuss the pictures.
- Books are read from front to back.
- Books tell a story.
- Pictures and words in books stand for things in the real world (symbols).
- Books can be fun.

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe = looking at the pictures

Sequence = telling what happened first, second, next

Label = naming things in the pictures

Predict = telling what might happen next

Question = asking and answering questions about the pictures

Prior knowledge = using what he already knows to help him learn something new

Setting the table

Little children love to help Mom or Dad.

Provide – Include children in your daily routine as much as possible. Everyday life can provide knowledge and experience that are essential to reading. Sharing experiences (gaining knowledge) and talking (learning language) in a situation where children are also encouraged to predict, express opinions and make choices (thinking) provide all the components they will need to make sense of printed words later on.

Allow – Let them help you as you make the bed, sweep the floor or set the table. You are not only allowing new learning to take place, you are helping them to feel valued and competent – you are boosting their self-esteem!

Teach – As you and your child work together, model how to set the table, provide names for things (knife, fork, soup spoon, dinner plate, napkin) and talk about what to do first, second, third... (first we set out the plates, second we set the forks, spoons and knives beside the plates, third...)

Learning About Reading

- hearing new words and learning their meaning
- hearing, seeing, feeling new experiences that become prior knowledge to be used in reading

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe	=	watching Mom or Dad model how to set the table
Label	=	learning the names of tools for eating
Sequence in order	=	setting things on the table
Categorize	=	things we eat with
Recognize patterns	=	place settings form a repeated pattern
Predict	=	if we set out soup bowls, we must be having soup

Here are some more PAT ideas to inspire children's early reading

- Your baby babbles, exploring the different sounds he can make with his voice. As you repeat and encourage the sounds that make sense in our language, he is developing his ability to listen for sounds.
- Talk about what is happening as you do things together – "Let's put on your blue shirt." "It's starting to rain. We're going to get wet!" Babies can understand more words than they can say.
- As children begin to talk, help them find the words for things they see and do. "Milk. You want some milk."
- Add words. "Kitty!" "Yes, soft kitty!" as you stroke the kitten's fur. Build on what they already know.
- Repeat words again and again so your children will be able to understand and remember them.
- Don't do all the talking. Ask questions and listen to your children's answers. You'll learn a lot about them and they'll feel loved and respected.
- Sing songs. The music makes the words easier to remember and gives children a feeling for the rhythm of language.
- Read to your children. A daily routine of sharing books establishes a love of reading in children even before they know what the words mean.
- Re-read with your children. Hearing the same story again gives them a chance to remember new words and understand the patterns of the story.

TOPIC 32

Early Writing

Definition

Early writing involves the various beginning stages of marks, scribbles and other written symbols used to represent ideas or things.

Examples

- A young child scribbles with a crayon and tells you it is a story.
- A young child recognizes pictures and wants to imitate them on paper.
- A child tells a story about his cat and asks you to write down what he says.

Key messages

- There is a direct link between writing and speaking, listening and reading.
- Learning to write begins at birth.
- Parents have an essential role in the early writing process.

About early writing

Writing begins with your children's first attempts to communicate. To be able to write words, they have to know about language and have prior knowledge. Before children write, they must understand that words stand for real things and that real things can also be represented by marks on a page.

Listening, speaking, reading and writing are so totally intertwined that anything that affects one of these facets of language affects all the others. Giving children lots of opportunities to have experiences and talk about them enables them to develop the prior knowledge and the words and ideas they will use to write later on.

Although writing begins with speaking, true writing is making symbols on paper. When children draw a circle with the stick arms and legs and call it "Mommy," they are beginning to be real writers! These simple drawings show that they know how to use a symbol on paper to represent an idea. Later, they will develop an awareness that there is a difference between drawing and writing. They begin to make scribbles, mimicking writing as they become aware that adults make certain shapes when they write letters.

Soon, children want to tell you what the scribbles "say." They understand the important concept that writing is talk written down and can be read back again. Encourage your children to write even before they can read or spell correctly. Writing, reading and spelling develop side-by-side.

As children begin to hear individual sounds and sound patterns in words and become aware (around Kindergarten or Grade 1) that certain letters stand for certain sounds, they will begin to use these letters in their stories. Consonants are usually heard and used first, so the story might look like this:

> *I cn rd m bk* OR *I can rid mi bik*
> (I can ride my bike.)

This "invented" or temporary spelling is an important and essential step on the way to conventional, correct spelling. Children are working out the rules, just as they did when they were learning to talk. Be sure to encourage your children's creative efforts! Inventive spelling is a child's necessary first step to becoming an efficient speller.

At this stage, you can help children listen for the sounds, sound patterns and words by pronouncing these sounds and words slowly and correctly. At this early stage, it is important to accept their attempts at writing and spelling what they hear.

How does early writing affect children's lifelong learning?

Just as early experiences with listening, speaking, exploring the world and thinking build the foundation for later reading, so do these same experiences support the child's development of writing skills. Early play with crayons, markers, paints and pencils leads to real writing later.

From the day children enter school, there is an expectation for them to communicate in print. Successful writing experiences in school will lead to greater opportunities for successful learning and employment in the future. In today's world, the need for computer literacy is great. Reading and writing are the basic tools needed to use a computer.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

Exploring writing materials

Spread out a piece of plastic on the table and provide your child with a choice of paper and markers.

Provide – Have a variety of materials available to encourage your child to draw and write, like crayons, chalk, markers, sand or salt trays, paints, scrap paper and cardboard.

Allow – Let your child explore and choose the materials she wants to use for her creations.

Teach – You might want to expand the learning by helping her make a scrapbook of her drawings or stories. Recycled wrapping paper and left-over wallpaper make colourful covers for your child's own books of stories and pictures.

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe	looking at and exploring the materials
Label	learning the names of the different materials
Predict	thinking about what each material will look like on the page
Prior knowledge	using what she already knows about the materials to learn new information

Going grocery shopping

Sometimes you need to get the shopping done quickly so you'll go alone. But sometimes you can leave enough time to make grocery shopping an outing with your child. This time can be a great learning experience for your child.

Provide – By taking your child shopping, you are providing a rich opportunity for language development. There are all those fruits and vegetables to observe and name, all the different kinds of packaging things come in, all the signs and labels to read, the people to talk to, things to lift and handle, etc.

Allow – Allow your child to look and question, to discover that the freezers are cold, to wait in line at the check out, to learn that you have to pay for groceries.

Teach – Answer his questions, look for patterns and categories, name all the new things he notices, explain why meat must be kept cold, show him the cash register receipt and ask him to help carry the bags to the car.

So where does writing come into this? Everywhere! Observing and labelling, noticing words on signs and words and numbers on the receipt, looking for patterns, talking, and questioning all give him the language and the prior knowledge that he will need to be a writer. This also helps to make your child more aware of letters and how they are grouped together to form words. If your child is interested, you can expand the writing component of this experience to include real writing.

Before you go shopping, have your child check the cupboards with you as you list the things you need to buy. Is there something he would like to add to the list? Print his items on your list (or let him print them himself in his own way). When you get home, ask if he'd like to make a story about your shopping trip. He can tell you the words as you write them down, or he can draw a picture and write his own words. Remember that spelling and letter formation are not important here. The purpose is for you to model and your child to experience that we can write down what we say, and that we or someone else can read it back. This "language experience" approach can be used for any experience your child has. It shows the connection between reading and writing. Why not keep a scrapbook of these stories?

Learning About Writing

- hearing new words and learning their meaning
- seeing and discussing printed words on signs and labels
- making connections between spoken words, written words, and reading
- seeing writing modelled
- hearing, seeing, feeling new experiences that become prior knowledge to be used in writing

Process of Thinking and Language Development Connection

Observe = seeing, smelling, touching the various foods

Label = learning the names for things in the grocery store

Categorize = vegetables, fruits, canned goods, meats, dairy products

Recognize Patterns = cans on the shelves, rows of carts, tiles on the floor

Cause and Effect = if ice cream isn't kept frozen, it will melt

Here are some more PAT ideas to inspire children's early writing

- Listen as your child tells about her adventures. Offer to print what she tells you, and read it together.
- Stick labels on objects around the house, for example, stove, sink, table, chair. (Use lower case letters and let your child help you print the words.) These labels can be used for learning games such as finding all the words that begin or end with a certain sound, or that belong in particular categories, for example, white things, things with legs.
- Write notes to your child. Leave them on the fridge, or in his shoe or mitten, or send one when he goes to visit a friend. Encourage him to write notes to you, to Grandma, to his friends.
- Model reading and writing as part of your daily life. Your child will want to do what you do.

TOPIC 33

Conversational Strategies to Foster Language Development

Definition

Conversation is the informal exchange of ideas by spoken words.

Examples

- Children talk together as they play in the sand box.
- A parent and child talk as they go for a walk
- Two people talk together as they wait for their bus.

Key messages

- Language needs a social context in which to develop.
- Conversations help children to develop their language.
- Children need to learn the skills of conversation, such as turn taking, active listening and appropriate responses.
- There is an effective way to have a conversation with a young child.
- The natural way that parents talk to a child is called "parentese."
- Parents can be effective language teachers in helping their children learn the art of conversation.

About conversational strategies to foster language development

We are born with the innate capacity to develop language, but it does not happen automatically. Conversations provide a child with opportunities to learn language. The more conversations you have with your child, the more you are helping with learning. However, there is more to conversation than just talking.

The following pointers can help your children learn effective conversational skills:

Turn taking

Children have to be shown how and encouraged to take turns during conversation. Some will let others do all the talking and need to be encouraged to participate. Others will want to do all the talking and need to learn to listen to others. By observing your child and getting to know her, you will learn how much to intervene.

Over time, children learn to recognize the signals that indicate that it is someone else's turn to talk. Gestures and direct words such as "What do you think?" may be used. Sometimes, a pause or silence indicates that the other person is expected to respond.

Children need time to think of what they want to say and how to say it. If they are cut off, children are less likely to participate. Adults can model turn-taking signals to help children learn how to take turns in conversation.

Face-to-face interaction

When we are conversing with young children, it is important to be face to face with them. Make eye contact and watch for facial expressions. When we are face to face with children – down at their level or lifting them up to ours – we are showing genuine interest in what they are saying. Face-to-face interactions let children know that they have our attention and that we are enjoying sharing a conversation and ideas with them.

Parentese

"Parentese" is the type of talking adults, especially parents, use with very young children. There are several key features to parentese:

- shorter sentences
- simpler words
- higher pitched voice
- a slower rate of speech
- highly repetitive
- sentences grammatically correct but simpler
- the child's sentences are repeated in some form
- vocabulary is simpler, using words that the child will understand

Parentese tends to keep children's interest longer. They continue to engage in the conversation or activity and try to imitate what they are hearing. Parentese helps very young children pay attention to language and develop their own language. Studies have shown that children who are exposed to parentese tend to develop language more quickly (Manolson, 1992).

Sensitivity to a child's developmental level

It helps to have a general idea of what the average language development expectations are for children at each stage. It is best not to expect certain events or milestones to happen at specific times. Some children speak in sentences very early on and some take a few months to learn this skill.

Observe and listen carefully to children's language attempts and model your language in conversation with them to a level slightly ahead of theirs. For example, if a child is using two-word sentences, expand to three or four words when you speak. If he is saying simple sentences, respond with simple sentences containing one or two descriptive words. For example, if a child says "I see a doggie," you might reply "Look at the big, furry doggy."

Questioning

The kinds of questions an adult asks can encourage or discourage children's participation in a conversation. As much as possible, ask questions that will encourage the child to continue to talk about the topic, how they feel, what they think.

Conversation starters – Children respond to questions that invite conversation. For example, you might ask "What did you do at Grammie's?" "How did you do that?" "What do you think will happen next?" "What will we do now?" "What did you play with in the sandbox?"

These open-ended questions encourage children to exchange information and talk about their thoughts and ideas. Your children may need time to think about their answer and find the words to use.

Using a questioning tone is a good way to ask children to explain or repeat what they have said if you did not understand the first time. By repeating a child's words in a questioning tone, you are showing interest and encouraging the child to repeat words or say them in a different way.

Conversation stoppers – Questions that require only a yes or no or a one-word answer – for example, "Did you have good time?" "Are you going to play with your truck?" "Do you want cereal?" discourage children from further conversation.

Questions that contain the answer – for example, "You want a drink of water, don't you?" also discourage conversation.

Too many questions asked at once and too quickly – for example, "Did you like that story?" "What part did you like best?" "Do you want another story?"– can be overwhelming for a child.

Self-talk, parallel talk, expansion, labelling, modelling

Adults can become effective language teachers by practising the following strategies with a young child:

Self-talk – Talk about what you are doing as you are doing it. For example, "I am peeling the carrots now. The carrots feel hard and cold. Now I will cut the carrots. Where is the pot? I am going to put the carrots in the pot."

Parallel talk – Talk about what your child is doing as he is doing it. For example, "You are playing with your car. Look, the car is going fast. The car is going up the road."

Expansion – Say what your child said but add a little to it. For example, your child might say "I wear coat" and you could reply, "Yes, you are wearing your red coat."

Labelling – Name things for your child. Use action words, prepositions and adjectives so that she has a variety of types of words to put together in sentences. For example, you might say "You're getting a toy out of the toybox. Now you are putting the book on the table. The book is a funny book. Let's open the book and read the funny story."

Modelling – Give your child a good language model in such a way that she is not afraid of being corrected. If she has positive feelings, she will more likely try to converse. For example, your child might say "Me wike toop" and you might say "You like soup."

Active listening

A child knows you're interested in him when you listen to what he is trying to say. When you listen intently to a child, you tell him he is important and worth attention and time. His natural reaction will be to attempt to use more words and talk to you more. The way you respond to a child's early attempts at language will greatly influence language development.

Interpreting your child's language attempts

It is natural for parents to try to understand what their child is saying. By interpreting out loud what we think the child has said, we are confirming that she is getting her message across. Often, we need to add our own words to hers as we interpret her meaning. This gives the child a language model to follow.

Sometimes, the interpretation is guesswork and you have to ask your child with a questioning tone or a gesture. What's important is that the child knows that someone is taking his words seriously enough to repeat them. If there are lots of smiles and hugs, interpreting becomes a shared language learning experience for parent and child.

Reinforcing your children's language attempts

Children need to know that you're noticing their first attempts to speak. You can reinforce these attempts in different ways:

- Sometimes, reinforcement is as simple as giving the child what she requested, for example, the child asks for "Wawa!" and you might say "You want water!" as you give her a glass of water.
- Continue to talk with your child about the topic she brought up. This shows her that her words and ideas are important to you. The give-and-take of conversation encourages her to keep trying to use the language she is hearing.
- Use physical reinforcements like smiles, a hug, a kiss or a touch.
- Use verbal reinforcements, such as "Good for you!" "Sounds good!" "I like the way you used that new word."

How do conversational strategies affect children's lifelong language learning?

All the strategies covered in this topic can effectively enhance children's lifelong language learning.

Conversation is the gateway to your child's language development. Talk to and with your child at every opportunity.

Conversation with adults involves listening, asking questions and responding to answers. This helps to develop a sense of security and encourages the child to continue exploring and using language. Participating in conversation with peers in informal play situations is equally important.

Such social interaction is one of the essential ingredients for intellectual development as the child listens to the viewpoints and ideas of others and compares them with her own understanding of the world (Labinowicz,1980).

Conversation is a valuable motivator for continued language development and learning. Conversation provides a natural context for language development to take place. Parents are in a key position to set up and encourage such language experiences.

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MODULE SEVEN

Health and Learning

© Christine Tripp

Introduction

There is a direct link between health and learning. The physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social resources a person has largely determine a person's ability to learn effectively. Examples:

- We learn more effectively if we have a feeling of physical well-being (physical health).
- Our stress level (emotional health) plays a significant role in our ability to concentrate.
- Life is a series of problem-solving activities. To do this most successfully requires that we have the resources to think critically, creatively and rationally (mental health).
- A person who does not believe he or she can learn (spiritual health), won't.
- Human beings depend on others to learn. Our ability to relate to others (social health) is essential to learning.

This module provides the big picture. It gives insights into the different ways we can view health holistically, as well as the role holistic health plays in young children's learning.

Health and Learning Topics

Topic 34: Health Resources
Topic 35: Health Influencers
Topic 36: Health Populations
Topic 37: Values
Topic 38: Health Strategies

TOPIC 34

Health Resources

Definition

Health is not the absence of illness. Health is the resources we have to manage our lives, such as physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources.

Key messages

- You have an essential role in supporting the development of your children's health resources.
- There is a direct link between health resources and life management.
- There is a direct link between health resources and learning.

Examples

- physical health
  - having our bodies function to the best of their ability
  - physical resources to manage an illness or a disability
- emotional health
  - taking responsibility
  - managing stress well
  - balancing our different roles
  - being tolerant toward ourselves and others
  - enjoying life
  - expressing feelings in positive ways
- mental health
  - ability to solve problems rationally and realistically
  - skills to manage stress
  - ability to relax and have fun
  - having a positive attitude
- spiritual health
  - having hope
  - ability to love and be loved
  - willingness to trust
  - valuing self, others and those in the community
- social health
  - quality of our friendships
  - our communication skills
  - family relationships
  - having sufficient income to support ourselves and our families

About health resources

We face difficult situations throughout our lives; there are no guarantees. So, what can we do? Think of health as a life bank account. This bank takes health deposits and health withdrawals. People put in deposits of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources.

There are times when we have to take health deposits out of our bank. We may face a health issue, marriage issue, financial problem, physical difficulty or an issue of self-esteem. This is when we are glad to have a bank of resources we can call on to see us through a difficult time. When things get back on track, we can make health deposits again.

Parents can teach children how to make their own health deposits, as well as make health deposits for them. The more time parents spend focusing on the development of health resources, the more they are supporting their children's lifelong learning opportunities.

Organizations and people who can support you in developing your children's health resources include:

- family, friends and neighbours
- family resource centres and community centres
- minister, rabbi, priest or other spiritual leader
- doctor, nurse practitioner or public health nurse
- chiropractors, naturopathic doctors, herbalists and massage therapists
- counsellors, therapists and social workers
- government departments, like Social Services
- non-profit organizations and support groups
- early childhood educators and teachers
- organizations that promote a healthy mind, body and spirit, like the YM/YWCA
- schools, colleges and universities

How do health resources affect children's lifelong learning?

Babies and small children are totally dependent on their parents or other caregivers for health resources. We provide physical health resources in the form of nutrition, safety and protection from illness. We provide spiritual health resources in the form of trust, love, hope, self-esteem and faith. We provide emotional health resources by supporting thinking processes and understanding. We provide social health resources in the form of relationships and community. Children use the home and the family to understand health.

There is a direct link between health resources and learning. Children who have the health resources necessary to manage their lives well naturally want to learn. Nutrition, sleep, self-esteem, opportunities to think creatively and interaction with others are some of the tools for learning. Children cannot fulfil their learning potential if they are hungry, have low self-esteem, are not encouraged and don't relate with others.

Parents usually know their children better than anyone else. They have a sense of when their children's physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources are up to par and when they are not. Society has built systems to help us with health and learning, but these systems can never replace the daily interaction between child and parent. Parents are often the experts on their children's social, emotional, physical and spiritual wellness.

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ACTIVITY
for parents

Health charts

This activity shows how important you are to your child's health. Fill out the following chart to see the impact you have.

Age of your child in years: ☐ x 365 = ☐ days

This is the number of days that you have had responsibility for your child's health. Fill in the numbers below based on the age of your child or use a check if your answer is "countless."

Physical Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Meals I have prepared
- ☐ Baths I have given
- ☐ Times I have dressed her or helped her to dress
- ☐ Times I have taken him to the doctor
- ☐ Times I have been up in the night with him
- ☐ Times I have saved her life
- ☐ Cuts, bruises and infections I have taken care of
- ☐ Times I have cared for him during illness

Emotional Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Times we have spent exploring the world together
- ☐ Times I have set limits
- ☐ Times we have spent imagining together
- ☐ Times we have played

Mental Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Times I have figured out what my child was trying to tell me
- ☐ Times I got someone to give me a mental break from my child
- ☐ Times I have set limits for my child
- ☐ Times I have not liked my child's behaviour
- ☐ Times I said "No" and kept my position
- ☐ Times we had a wonderful experiences discovering things together

Spiritual Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Times I have held him
- ☐ Times I have shown my love
- ☐ Times we have spent exploring nature
- ☐ Times I have shown her she is wonderful
- ☐ Times I have shown her she is respected
- ☐ Times I have shown him I trust him
- ☐ Times I have shown her hope
- ☐ Times I have read to him

Social Health

(Put a check if your answer is "countless")

- ☐ Number of meals we have eaten together
- ☐ Time in hours spent talking together
- ☐ Number of family talks
- ☐ Amount of time spent with adults
- ☐ Amount of time spent with friends

That's a lot of hours! Think of how important you are for your child's health!

TOPIC 35

Health Influencers

Definition

Health influencers are all the things that affect our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health.

Examples

- Culture and the family's religious affiliations influence children's spiritual practices and spiritual health.
- Family environment influences children's social health. Loving, trusting parents positively influence their children's lifelong ability to relate to people.
- Education is a powerful influencer on family income.
- Diet influences children's physical and mental health.

Key messages

- Culture, heredity, gender and race can influence children's health.

About health influencers

The following factors influence your children's health and also affect their learning.

You may want to think about the influencers that we cannot change, and those we can.

Income and employment
When families have sufficient income and steady employment, they are better able to provide the basic necessities of life, such as food and shelter.

Preventive health practices
Parents are responsible for using Canada's preventive health system to ensure that their children stay healthy, such as regular visits to the doctor, immunization programs and regular dental care.

Gender
Society often treats boys and girls, men and women, differently. Societal roles, child-rearing practices, and employment and educational opportunities are often affected by gender.

Heredity
Genetic traits and biological characteristics such as skin colour, dominant blood types and body proportions can influence health and physical appearance. When we are born, we inherit

certain characteristics from our parents, including our physical features, some of our natural abilities and our risk factors for some illnesses.

Ability

People have a wide range of physical and mental abilities, both inherited and developed.

Social supports

Social supports and networks provide access to health resources for parents and children. When social supports are available, learning and the ability to solve health problems are enhanced.

Environments

An environment can be physical or social. A healthy environment provides the people in it with quality physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health and the opportunity to learn.

Child care

The way that young children are cared for in the family, the community and society determines their lifelong health and learning. The attention a society gives to its children determines its future.

Culture

Culture gives us our roots, our sense of place and our identity. It also strongly affects health and learning.

Education

Education is one of the most powerful factors in providing opportunities to be healthy and to learn.

How do health influencers affect children's lifelong learning?

Each health influencer is a health resource and plays a part in the well-being of children and families. A "health promotion" or "resource model" focuses on what we do have, not on what we don't have. Everyone has physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources. These may vary during our lives; we have always some.

Often, we don't see the health resources we have. We don't take the time to think about our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social strengths. Remember when you brought your first child home. It suddenly hits you – for the next 20 years, or more, you are responsible for this tiny person! You have never done this before! How are you going to manage? You manage because you already have many of the health and parenting resources you need. Focusing on the health resources you and your child have, rather than on the ones you don't have, will enhance your children's lifelong learning.

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ACTIVITY
for parents

Health influencer checklist

Check each health influencer that is an issue in your family now.

☐ Income and Employment
☐ Preventive Health Practices
☐ Gender
☐ Heredity
☐ Ability
☐ Social Supports
☐ Environments
☐ Child Care
☐ Culture
☐ Education

Check each health influencer that was an issue in your family when you were a child.

☐ Income and Employment
☐ Preventive Health Practices
☐ Gender
☐ Heredity
☐ Ability
☐ Social Supports
☐ Environments
☐ Child Care
☐ Culture
☐ Education

Check each health influencer that you think will be an issue for your child when he is your age.

☐ Income and Employment
☐ Preventive Health Practices
☐ Gender
☐ Heredity
☐ Ability
☐ Social Supports
☐ Environments
☐ Child Care
☐ Culture
☐ Education

TOPIC 36

Health Populations

Definition

Health populations are groups of people who have been placed into categories of physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health.

Examples

- individuals with a physical disability
- gifted children
- children who have learning disabilities
- children with speech difficulties
- youth who smoke

Key messages

- Your family as a unit and your children as individuals are placed into different health populations.
- All children are placed into multiple health populations based on health influencers, for example, family income, gender, ability, disability.
- Placing children into health populations is a way to keep an ongoing "health check" on many physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health issues based on the different categories in which they can be placed.

About health populations

Use these four categories to think about your health resources and managing them:

1. as an individual
2. as a member of a family
3. as a member of a community
4. as part of society

Individual

We all have responsibility for our own health. We need to constantly work to make sure that the health resources in our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health "accounts" have enough "deposits" when we need them.

During children's preschool years, parents are helping them to develop lifelong health resources. Parents and all adults who interact with children model behaviour affecting health – they provide opportunities for their children to learn about health resources, allow them to learn about their health resources independently and directly teach them about health resources.

Family

We bond with those who love, care for and support us. The family is where we first learn about health resources and life management, and where we recharge our health batteries. Raising a family is difficult. There are times when the health needs of one member may consume all the family health resources.

Community

The community must be healthy to ensure the well-being of its children. Think of the impact on a community when a major employer shuts down. People have less money, more stress and fewer supports. A healthy community should have enough resources to meet the health and learning needs of all its members, particularly the youngest.

Society

To have healthy communities, we need healthy countries and a healthy planet. We are all citizens of the same world. The global economy has made us interdependent socially, economically and environmentally.

ACTIVITY for parents

Reflecting on health populations

Take some time to reflect on the different populations your child may be placed into or has been placed into from birth to age 6. Beside each of these populations, write examples of the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health issues that go along with being in this population. Remember that the word "population" here refers to a group and is used in a broad way. For example, in the case of health, population with heart problems, population with hearing difficulties, etc.

How do health populations affect children's lifelong learning?

Children are placed into "populations" all the time. In fact, they are placed into a number of populations. Each population they fit into has health implications. Imagine some categories:

- special needs/average/gifted
- physically challenged/physically gifted
- single-parent family/two-parent family
- underweight/overweight
- high income/low income

Each population that children are placed into has physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health considerations. It is important for adults to understand the implication of having a child in a particular population.

The different populations that children are placed into can have a dramatic impact on learning and health.

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TOPIC 37

Values

Definition

Values are the principles, standards and attitudes that we think are important, for example:

- sharing
- caring
- balance
- equality
- social justice
- respect
- choice
- freedom

Examples

- the right to an education
- the balance of work and family time
- treating men and women the same
- respecting other cultures
- keeping our environment healthy

Key messages

- The family and the community are where lifelong values are learned.
- Values can be both negative and positive.
- Values determine the way a society works.

About values

Parents instil their own values and the values of the society in their children. Parents who value moderation pass that value on to their children. Parents who demonstrate concern for others teach their children to be caring and compassionate.

Values are not always positive. "Sharing" is a positive word, but only when sharing is a positive experience. Having to share food when there is not enough to eat is not a positive experience. Caring is positive, but not if we spend too much time caring for others and neglect to care for ourselves.

Parents have a lot of influence over the way their children view the world. Most of what children value is learned first from their family. In homes where respect and sharing are part of daily life, these values are learned. In homes where prejudice and self-centeredness are part of life, these too are learned.

Values are also determined by the way people view themselves, each other and the world. Individual accomplishment and self-interest are often highly valued in our society. Tomorrow's adults will need to think more globally, economically, socially and environmentally.

Review the values listed in the definition. Think about what you are doing as parents to foster the values you think are important.

How do values affect children's lifelong learning?

Very young children are busy developing a value system. They do not understand the adult concepts of right and wrong, and are forming their own code of ethics and behaviour by watching, listening and interacting with others. They rely on the attitudes and values of family and others to determine how they should behave. This can be confusing because different adults in a child's life may place value on different things. One parent may value reading, but the other may not. A grandparent might be religious, when the parents are not.

Children become quite independent by about 3 or 4 years old. They are constantly assessing everything and everyone they come into contact with. Using thinking, language and knowledge, children test theories and push boundaries.

Adults use their value systems to manage their daily lives. Think of how you manage your intimate relationships, the food you eat, the care of your body and your job. All this and much more is determined by your value system, or what you think is important. We see the world through our values, which are formed early in life. Our values may change, grow and evolve as we learn more and have more experiences. While our ages and stages of life bring about shades of differences in our values, much of what we value throughout our lives is determined in our early years.

Our attitudes and values determine the importance of learning. If we do not think it is important to learn, we will find learning difficult.

Parents who:
- foster a love of learning
- value exploring the world
- value being open to the views and beliefs of others
- explain why they value certain things
- understand the role of values in the learning process
- recognize their role in modelling and teaching values
- teach that children of all races should be treated the same

... are giving their children the opportunity to develop a positive value system for life.

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ACTIVITY for parents

Writing a letter to your child(ren)

Think about each of the values listed in the definition and choose the three that are most important to you. Imagine it is 20 years from now. Write a letter to your child(ren) telling them why you want them to learn and practise the three values you have chosen.

1. ______________________________

2. ______________________________

3. ______________________________

Date ______________________________

Dear ______________________________

You are an adult now and on your own. Here are some of the values I have tried to pass on to you and that I hope you will pass on to your children.

Love,

TOPIC 38

Health Strategies

Definition

Health strategies are resources we have and develop to manage our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health.

Examples

- exercising on a regular basis
- taking children for regular medical and dental checkups
- protecting our environment
- helping to build recreation facilities

Key messages

- There is a direct link between children's capacity to learn and their health resources.
- Children depend on parents, the community and government to provide them with health resources.
- Parents have a responsibility to teach health strategies that enable children to manage their lives well.
- Each child is unique, and so is each health strategy.

About health strategies

We often take our health for granted. Usually, it is not until we are faced with a health issue that we say, "I had better do something about this." For example, if you have an accident you handle the situation by using strategies such as medical resources that are available, your personal knowledge of health, your insurance. The following are examples of developing your children's health strategies.

Physical health: You regularly take your child to participate in an organized sport event. She learns coordination and body awareness, and enhances her muscle development and lung capacity.

Emotional health: Your child sometimes talks out of turn. You develop an approach of giving your child full attention when it is her turn to talk. This makes her feel good about waiting her turn.

Mental health: You go for a walk with your child and see a squirrel. You talk to him about the problems a squirrel has to solve raising a family.

Spiritual health: Your child has shown a sensitivity to others. You buy a pet for him. By caring for the animal, he learns strategies of caring for and about others.

Social health: Your child is overly aggressive. You seek help to find out what to do about it, and apply this knowledge to your child who learns how to manage his aggression.

How do health strategies affect children's lifelong learning?

Early learning is lifelong learning. Research on brain development tells us that many strategies we use during our lifetime in the areas of health and learning are determined by the time a child is 5 or 6 years of age (Steinhauer, 1999).

The brain patterns for emotional health are wired in by the time a child is 2 years old. How people react to situations is wired in at the same time. Self-esteem, respect for self and others, our belief in our capacity to learn and many other life issues are learned during these early years.

The early years are the time when the brain accepts countless messages and develops patterns for lifelong health and learning. Health and learning do not happen in isolation – they depend on one another.

ACTIVITY for parents

Health-y times

Parents have the primary responsibility for their child's mental, physical, social, spiritual and emotional health. There are others such as extended family and caregivers who have a major role as well.

We often take for granted that children will develop health resources naturally over time. However, providing opportunities for children to learn about health through activities can often enhance the child's understanding of health.

Think about a time you went for a walk or took your child grocery shopping.

Give one or two examples of opportunities to further develop your child's understanding of health.

Physical Health:
Example – "No, we're not going to get the Honey Sugar Cereal because..."

Emotional Health:
Example – "I know you're tired. Do you think you can hang in for 5 more minutes?"

Mental (cognitive) Health:
Example – "There are three kinds of cookies. Which one would you like? Why?"

Social Health:
Example – "We don't push in line for the slide because..."

Spiritual Health:
Example – "Wow, you really made me feel good when you..."

MODULE EIGHT

A Framework for Learning

Christine Tripp

Introduction

The first part of this module (Factors That Affect Learning) examines five health-related factors that affect learning. Specific examples of the role of these factors in learning are given. The goal of this section is to have participants understand that the quality of children's learning is mostly determined by these five factors.

Some of the factors can be significantly altered or changed completely by others, others can be changed little or not at all. Because a factor, for example a physical disability, cannot be changed, it does not mean that effective learning cannot and will not take place. Regardless of the factor, participants should look at the learning resources the child has and that are available externally, and not focus on the ones that are not available.

The second part of this module (Understanding the World) explains how learning is natural and that it is related directly to school learning.

Young children do not think about learning, they just learn. The four processes in this part are ones that children use to understand their world. As they ask countless questions, examine everything they come into contact with, find uses for things, use things in imaginative ways, and figure things out, they are "doing science, social studies, math, art and music." Children who have developed skills of inquiry, exploration, discovery and making connections are well on their way to having successful school experiences.

Factors That Affect Learning Topics

Topic 39: Physical Factors
Topic 40: Environmental Factors
Topic 41: Social Factors
Topic 42: Emotional Factors
Topic 43: Neurological Factors

Understanding the World Topics

Topic 44: Inquiry
Topic 45: Exploration
Topic 46: Discovery
Topic 47: Making Connections

TOPIC 39

Physical Factors

Definition

Physical factors include everything that has to do with a child's physical development and abilities, for example:

- wellness
- growth
- nervous system development
- development of physical skills
- physical disabilities
- nutrition

Examples

- Babies can learn only about things close to them because they can't move around on their own or see very far.
- Toddlers cannot move around and learn about new things that are out of reach until they are physically ready to walk.
- A 3-year-old's lips, tongue and vocal cords have developed the coordination to speak and ask questions.
- A 5- or 6-year-old's ability to learn to read is influenced by vision, hearing, health, rest and nutrition.

Key messages

- Learning depends on physical growth and wellness.
- There are physical factors parents can control (such as nutrition).
- There are physical factors parents can often influence (such as buying glasses to correct a child's vision).
- There are physical factors that are genetic or developmental (such as a physical or mental disability).
- Children cannot learn to do something physical until they are developmentally ready.

About physical factors

Physical factors have a profound effect on learning. Many of these factors are beyond your control because they are genetically or developmentally determined, but your response to them is very important.

When you know how age and developmental factors affect what your children are ready and able to learn, you will be able to relax and enjoy their growing skills and accomplishments. For example:

- 1-year-olds do not have the physical control necessary for toileting. A child will usually show an interest in learning about and be ready to use the potty or toilet at about the age of 3.
- Toddlers have many more learning opportunities as they develop the physical strength and coordination to walk and explore.
- The muscle control of 5-year-olds enable them to master skills such as balancing, catching, hopping and climbing.

As children grow and develop, certain physical abilities and new types of learning become possible. For example, the muscles of the neck and back must be strong enough before they can sit up. The nerves and small muscles of the hand and fingers must develop enough for them to hold a pencil and learn to write.

Pay close attention and encourage children to do things they are physically ready to do. If you feel that they are not progressing or notice a problem – for example, a 3-year-old who isn't talking, or a child who doesn't seem to hear well – see your doctor.

Some physical factors can be real obstacles to learning, like poor vision or hearing, lack of mobility or illness. You probably can't change these things, but you can make it easier for children to deal with them by getting help from family, friends, the community and health professionals.

How do physical factors affect children's lifelong learning?

Physical factors affect learning at all ages and stages of our lives. Young children are limited by their developing bodies; older adults are limited by their gradually declining abilities. At all ages, we should try to optimize our physical wellness – our lifelong learning depends on it!

When we understand and accept children's physical readiness or unreadiness for certain things and celebrate their growing abilities, we lay the foundation for their high self-esteem and feeling of competence. We are also laying the foundation for early learning which in turn sets the stage for future learning.

ACTIVITY for parents

Thinking of physical factors

List some of the physical factors that affect your own learning. For example:

- Do you have any allergies to food, products or the environment?
- Do you wear glasses or a hearing aid?
- Are you getting enough sleep? Do you have lots of energy?

Think about how these factors directly affect you.

Picture your child. List some of the things she has learned lately. Is she learning to walk? Is she learning to use the potty? Is she into everything? Think about how physical factors affect her learning. Which of these are developmental (happen when the child is physically ready, but not before)?

Do you know which foods give you the "most bang for your buck" nutritionally? For example, do you know the difference between "apple drink" and "apple juice"? Do you know the role that fat plays in physical development of young children? How much calcium does your child need each day? You'll feel more confident when you've learned all you can.

TOPIC 40

Environmental Factors

Definition

Environmental factors include anything in the child's world that influences learning, for example, housing, books, toys, pets, TV and nature.

Examples

- The colourful mobile above a baby's bed helps him learn to focus and follow objects with his eyes.
- A 2-year-old plays in the bathtub and discovers that some objects sink and others float.
- A 3-year-old sits with a picture book and reads herself a story while looking at the pictures.
- A 5-year-old plays in the park and looks at ants.
- An adult takes the scenic drive home from work and decides to walk to work the rest of the week.

Key messages

- You have control over most of the environmental factors in your children's life.
- Environmental factors affect your children's learning.

About environmental factors

Since parents have a lot of control over environmental factors, it's important to be aware of how much you can do to make the world a learning laboratory.

Children are learning all day, every day! Everything they see, hear, smell, touch or taste teaches them something. As you try to provide the best possible learning environment, ask yourself: "Does this environment provide positive learning opportunities?" and "Is this environment safe?"

Children need to explore, do and talk about real things. Toddlers get into everything, not to be naughty, but because they are curious and eager to find out about the world. They have no prior knowledge to tell them what is or isn't safe, so it's important to ensure that the environment is childproof as well as interesting. The kitchen, garden, workshop, park, TV and computers are all part of your child's learning environment. But remember that even the best nature show on TV doesn't offer the same real-world, multisensory learning experience as a walk in the woods or a day at the beach.

Toys are an important part of your children's learning environment. Toys allow them to pretend, try out adult behaviours with child-sized tools, use their imaginations, make discoveries and soothe themselves. We joke about how young children often find the packaging more interesting than the toy inside. Maybe that's because they can do more and learn more with the box than with the expensive but less challenging toy.

When choosing a toy for children, think about how it can be used. Will it encourage them to be creative and use their imaginations, or can it only be used one way? Will it inspire active play? You might also want to consider the values that toys represent and whether or not these fit with the ones you want your child to have.

Simple toys often have many possibilities. For example, a sheet over two chairs can be a tent, a house or a cave. Mom's old skirt and blouse can become a dressup wardrobe for make-believe parties and trips to the office. Scrap paper and crayons or markers encourage children to draw and write.

Young children need lots of physically active play. Young bones and muscles need to be exercised regularly to develop. Many children are overweight or inactive. This is a health concern and limits learning by restricting mobility and decreasing self-esteem.

Some environmental factors can negatively affect children's learning. Check out your children's exposure to environmental pollutants like cigarette smoke, lead, poisons, PVCs (polyvinyl chlorides), and loud or continuous noise.

How do environmental factors affect children's lifelong learning?

Everything that children learn helps them to learn something else. It's like sticking things to the velcro ball of your brain – the bigger the velcro ball gets, the more you can stick to it. Children who learn about geometry and gravity while playing with building blocks or a rubber ball may better understand geometric theorems and principles of physics when they are older. Children who have access to books, pencils and paper may be more likely to love reading, writing and drawing throughout life. The more we learn, the more we want to learn.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Creative toys

Take a cardboard box. See how many ways you can use the box with your children. Try the same activity with containers, old clothes, pieces of wood and household items.

List your children's toys. What do they do with each toy? Which of these toys encourages creative play? Which don't?

List some things in your children's environment that are free and can be used to help learning. Old socks can be turned into puppets or beanbags, milk cartons can be used as houses in a miniature village, and toilet paper rolls make great binoculars. How many can you think of?

TOPIC 41

Social Factors

Definition

Social factors include the relationships and people in a child's life, for example:

- parents
- siblings
- relatives
- friends
- caregivers
- teachers
- community members
- pets
- imaginary friends

Examples

- Babies depend on parents most of the time to provide the multisensory learning experiences of sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste.
- Feelings of trust, love and safety are learned by relating to a few people, usually immediate family members
- Preschoolers can safely test boundaries when there is mutual respect between parent and child.
- Optimal child learning happens when parents provide opportunities for exploration and discovery, allow the child to lead the learning, teach directly and indirectly, and model behaviour
- Adults are more motivated to learn when they have the support and encouragement of family and friends.

Key messages

- Social wellness is important for your children's learning.
- You can provide a positive social environment for learning.
- A variety of individuals and groups play a role in children's learning.

About social factors

The relationships we develop with others are a learning and health resource. Human beings are naturally social. We need to fulfil our basic needs for survival, fun, love and belonging, power and freedom. To do this, we need people.

Young children learn how to relate socially by being with people. They test others, not to be annoying, but to learn. If they don't learn social skills as young children, they may have trouble learning them throughout life.

Young children often appear to be thinking only of themselves. And they are! They are still learning important social skills like how to share and empathize with others. They don't have many social graces, so expect embarrassing moments. Remarking on Uncle Bob's big nose or telling a caller that you can't come to the phone because you're on the toilet is not meant to be mean or insensitive. Children simply speak their minds, often pointing out what adults think but would never say. Remember that young children are 24-hour learners, almost entirely dependent on adults to provide the social environment where learning can take place.

Pets and imaginary friends are social resources. They are always there, providing unconditional love and acceptance. Children use them to discover and explore relationships as well. You can sit children in front of the TV and they'll be quiet; but they probably won't learn as much as when you interact with them yourself.

We learn a lot about ourselves from others. Children have a right to stable, ongoing, supportive relationships with others family, friends, caregivers, and eventually classmates and co-workers. Yes, it does take a whole village to raise a child!

How do social factors affect children's lifelong learning?

The more children interact with others, the more they learn about people and the world. They develop social skills, build confidence in their ability to get along with others, learn how to satisfy their needs for love and belonging, find out facts and opinions from others, learn how to share and to deal with conflict, and become fully developed, interdependent human beings.

ACTIVITIES for parents

Make a map

Create a map of your child's social life using the examples that are listed in the definition. List all family members, friends and other people who your child sees or has contact with regularly. Choose one at a time. Think of how they have affected your child's learning, and list them. For example, an older sister might take a child to the playground, play dress up or finger paint.

Keep a diary

Each evening for a week, write about your child's day. Focus on the interactions she had with other people and things. Compare how much she is learning from other people with what she is learning from things – for example, toys or TV.

Interactions

Pick a day when your child will be with you all day. Put a sheet of paper on the fridge. Each time you interact with your child, note the time and the activity. By the end of the day, you'll realize how much you are socializing with him.

TOPIC 42

Emotional Factors

Definition

Emotional factors are feelings shaped by our inborn temperament, personality, what we experience and what we are taught.

Examples

- Infants whose emotional needs are met when their parents care for, hold and cuddle them will be alert, responsive and able to begin the lifelong process of learning. They are learning empathy in their parents' arms.
- Toddlers who are becoming aware of their independence, showing strong impulses and perhaps a temper. Parents who help toddlers to manage their impulses are paving pathways to emotional intelligence.
- A 3-year-old wants to dress himself. He is self-motivated to master skills that are important to him and to his self-esteem.
- A 5-year-old is learning to tie her shoes. She tries again and again until she gets it right. She is demonstrating persistence and determination – signs of emotional intelligence.
- A neighbour gives you advice about caring for your newborn. You feel threatened, not supported.

Key messages

- As a parent, you have a strong influence on learning.
- Children are born with their own temperament, which affects their emotional responses.
- You can provide a positive emotional environment for learning.

About emotional factors

Emotional well-being and learning go hand-in-hand. Our emotions affect all other areas of our lives – our physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health. We feel comfort and pleasure as we enjoy lunch with a friend, or pride and excitement when we watch our child take her first step. We feel upset and angry when someone criticizes us, or worried and fearful when our spouse is laid off at work, for example.

All humans experience a wide range of emotional responses. Not everyone responds to a situation in the same way. One person may respond to teasing with anger, another might laugh and reply with a joke. Why is there such a difference? Our emotional reactions are influenced by several factors – some are inborn, some are taught. We all have our own neurological-chemical makeup that gives us our own inborn temperament or disposition (Barskey, 1988). Some people back away from too much excitement and stress. They need quiet time by themselves to maintain emotional health. Other people like lots of action. They need social stimulation and risk taking to satisfy their emotional needs.

What does this have to do with learning? All personality types will learn best if the learning situation is adapted to their needs. For example, a sensitive child will not learn well in a noisy, cluttered environment, or one where there are frequent changes or too many new experiences. On the other hand, a child who is not happy unless he is constantly in motion may not learn well if he is confined to a quiet corner. Parents can't change their child's natural emotional makeup, but they can be sensitive to their child's needs and try to make the emotional environment as healthy as possible.

Parents play a crucial part in influencing these emotional factors, for example:

- self-esteem (feeling capable, in control and valued)
- stress (a lack of security, unrealistic expectations)
- understanding self and others (emotional intelligence)

Children's self-esteem depends on:

- being capable – Give them chances to develop their strengths and talents. Let them make mistakes and don't always run to the rescue. Succeeding at a difficult task is a great self-esteem booster!
- having some control – Let them make some age-appropriate choices. Do they want peas or carrots for lunch? Would they like to wear running shoes or sandals?
- feeling valued – They need to know you love them no matter what. Point out how and why they are special and lovable. Don't put her down with negative comments, and don't shower her with false praise. Indiscriminate praise becomes meaningless. Children may no longer trust your judgement if they know the praise was unearned.

Stress – both positive and negative – is a reality and we learn from it. A parent's role is to see that whatever stress a child experiences enhances rather than interferes with learning. If your child is upset by a new situation, prepare her for it by rehearsing it.

Too much stress in a child's life will severely limit learning. Emotional distress overwhelms the thinking part of the brain and interferes with healthy learning. In his book *Emotional*

Intelligence, Goleman refers to a "neural tripwire" that allows strong emotions to "capture and drive much of the rest of the brain – including the rational mind" (1995: 17). In such circumstances, another kind of learning may be taking place – the brain circuits are being programmed for fear, anger, failure and withdrawal.

Parents are powerful models of how to handle emotions. Parents who treat their children's feelings with respect (modelling empathy), coach them in how to express anger safely, how to express caring and how to solve conflicts peacefully are teaching lifelong emotional intelligence. Their children are likely to have lower stress levels and better physical health, be liked by other children, have fewer behaviour problems and be better learners.

How do emotional factors affect children's lifelong learning?

Emotional intelligence (which includes self-control, persistence, self-motivation and empathy) has more effect on life success than I.Q. (Goelman, 1995). Most importantly, these lessons can be taught in childhood. These early emotional lessons actually sculpt the brain's circuitry and form healthy emotional habits for life.

The emotional lessons children learn from you during these early years will determine their success throughout life – in their relationships, work and understanding themselves. The emotional connections wired into their brain during childhood will affect their willingness and ability to learn, their physical health, their social life and certainly their happiness.

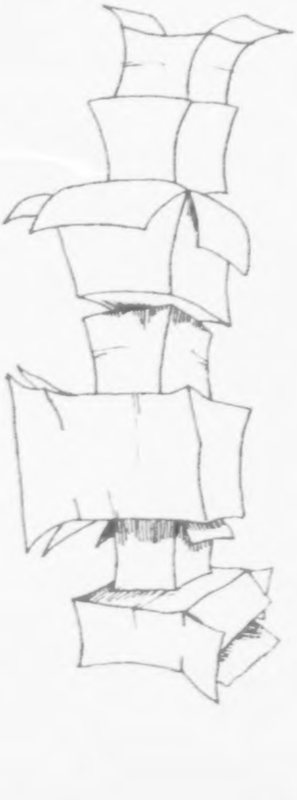
ACTIVITIES for parents

It's hard to concentrate!

Think of a time when you were upset or worried about a personal issue. Did you find it hard to concentrate on anything else? In a very emotional situation, we often find it difficult to do even the simplest tasks, let alone learn new things.

Getting along

Your child's playmate has just grabbed the toy your toddler was playing with. Here is an opportunity to help your child cope with his anger and deal with a peer. What do you do?



TOPIC 43

Neurological Factors

Definition

A neurological factor is anything that affects the brain, the control centre for all our conscious and unconscious acts.

Key messages

- The brain is a complex organ.
- Brain stimulation in the early years is essential for lifelong learning.
- Certain learning difficulties are the result of the way the brain is "wired."

Examples

- The infant brain is reacting to stimuli in ways that are geared for survival. The brain is not "thinking" as we understand it. It is figuring out how to think.
- A baby's life is full of first impressions. Think of these as small streams, and then as rivers of the mind. An infant's early experiences form the rivers of trust, hope and love.
- The brain has a natural desire to make sense of things. That's why children ask hundreds of questions, often about the same thing. They want to learn and they look to the people who they think have the answers – parents.
- A child's brain understands things through concrete sensory experience, not through abstract discussion. Young children have to experience their world before they understand it. They can't talk about things they have not experienced.
- Most adults use both concrete and abstract concepts. Adults use their prior knowledge and experience to link, make connections and think in ways that are beyond the capability of young children.

About neurological factors

When learning is designed to fit the way the brain functions most naturally, we learn more easily, remember more and make better connections. The brain learns best by using as many senses as possible. If you use all five senses to learn something, you have allowed your brain to make connections in five or more different places. That's why young children use as many senses as possible to learn. They see, touch, listen to, smell, feel and taste almost everything they can get their hands on. They are learning the natural way – the way the brain learns best.

We come into the world wanting to learn. The brain soaks up knowledge at an amazing rate. It handles millions of bits of data per second. We make decisions about where to shift our eyes and attention over 100,000 times a day! We are taking in information even when we are not aware of it – 99% of what we learn is unconscious (Jensen, 1996).

The brain appears to have certain blocks of time when there are mental growth spurts – 18 to 36 months of age for walking and talking, 5 to 7 years old for reading and writing, and 11 to 15 years old for abstract reasoning and social maturity (Jensen, 1996).

The brain is a map-maker. Each item we learn is linked in some way with what we already know and stored in an area of the brain. Each person has a unique brain, so our mental maps are unique. That's why it's so important to provide a wide variety of learning options so that young children can develop their own maps in their own ways.

Some brains have trouble making certain kinds of maps. When the neurological paths take a detour, have pot holes or have confused connections, a person may find some kinds of learning difficult. Researchers have observed actual differences in the structure and functioning of the brains of people with learning disabilities. A learning disability is a disorder that affects a person's ability to interpret what is seen and heard, or to link and process information in the brain. Specific difficulties can occur in spoken or written language, in coordination, in self-control or in maintaining attention for a task.

Here are some important things to remember about the brain and learning (Jensen, 1996).

- The brain is not separate from the body. There is a real body-mind connection.
- Learning involves your body, your emotions, your attitudes and your experiences.
- We have two major levels of memory – short-term and long-term.
- The brain is integrated, but certain areas control most of a function, like seeing or breathing.
- You don't need to have your child's attention for very long to teach effectively. Short learning periods are usually the most effective with young children.
- We have natural learning styles through which we learn more easily.
- There are at least eight types of intelligence.
- We are not aware of 99% of what we learn.
- The brain is always trying to make sense out of what is happening.
- Nutrition is an important factor in the brain's ability to learn and operate.
- Individual "biological clocks" influence our learning.
- Music, humour, drama, role playing, games, dancing, running and other activities greatly enhance the brain's ability to learn.

How do neurological factors affect children's lifelong learning?

The way the brain is wired in early life greatly affects every area of future learning. Early learning experiences program the brain to react in certain ways. We know that children who do not feel safe or are not cuddled and loved do not learn well.

If a child's brain has developed neural connections as a result of sensory stimulation; if it has been shaped by loving attention and feelings of security; if it has been programmed for language through verbal interaction with adults; and if it has received the proper nutrition to grow – then that child's brain has been wired for learning.

ACTIVITIES to do with children

What can we do with this?

Give your child something she has not seen before. Ask her what it could be used for. Observe how she uses the environment to make up uses for the object. Her brain does this naturally. Try limiting the item to only one use and see how quickly your child loses interest. Suggest more options for its use and see how naturally she learns to play with it.

Which holds more?

Get a tall, narrow glass and a short, wide glass. Fill each glass with the same amount of juice. Ask your child which one he wants. He will probably want the taller one because he thinks this glass has more juice in it. Even if you show him that both glasses hold the same amount, his brain is not yet developed enough to grasp the concept. As his brain matures, he will reach a point (around 6 or 7 years old) when he can see that the glasses hold the same amount (Labinowitz, 1980).

TOPIC 44

Inquiry

Definition

Inquiry is a way of finding out about the world by asking questions.

Examples

- A baby inquires about her body by watching, reaching for, touching and finally tasting her toes.
- A toddler finds out about his parents' limits by testing their patience.
- A child asks why he needs his boots today, where the class will go on its outing and what time Dad will pick him up.
- A parent and child go for a walk in the woods and the child inquires about the trees, the animals and the sounds.

Key messages

- Children naturally ask questions.
- Children learn about the world by asking questions.
- Children look to their parents to answer most of their questions.
- Encouraging children's questions is important.
- Most questions that children ask are natural, purposeful and meaningful.

About inquiry

Children are little scientists developing theories about the world around them. Children relate first-time experiences to what they already know – their prior knowledge – to build their knowledge. Children also use inquiry to compare what they already know to what they want to find out. This means that they will ask questions, and more questions! Sometimes the questions are spoken; sometimes they are just actions or sounds.

Young children seem to question everything. When they look, listen, smell, touch and taste, they are expressing their natural curiosity. "How does this feel?" "What does it taste like?" "If I push it, what will happen?" "If I cry, will Mom or Dad come?"

A 3- to 6-year-old will often use inquiry to ask questions about things like food and mealtime – for example, "Why do I have to eat peas?" "What's in shepherd's pie?" "How many bites do I have to eat?" "When can I leave the table?"

How does inquiry affect children's lifelong learning?

Scientists always use inquiry to test their theories and create new ones. Similarly, children use inquiry to understand, test and use information. Otherwise, learning would be memorizing facts, rather than developing an understanding of the world.

Inquiry is important to the development of critical thinking. When we support children's natural curiosity by answering questions and encouraging more inquiry, we help to ensure that they will keep asking questions throughout their lives. If we do not develop the skill of inquiry in childhood, we are likely to take things at face value as adults.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Inquiries

Help your child discover something new, like a gardening tool, a kitchen utensil, a piece of clothing, a photo from a magazine.

Model inquiry by thinking out loud about the item. "I wonder what this thing could be." "What do you think this is used for?" "Who is in this picture and what are they doing?"

Depending on the age of your child, you can work together on who, what, when, where, why and how questions, or you could explore an object using your five senses (sight, hearing, smell, touch and taste), modelling and asking questions — for example, "What does the sandpaper feel like?" "How does the peanut butter cookie smell?" "What will happen if you blow into the soup"

Remember that you and your child are learning to inquire, not looking for a right answer. Your child's ability to inquire is as boundless as her imagination.

TOPIC 45

Exploration

Definition

Exploration is how we examine and investigate the world around us.

Examples

- A baby explores her world by looking around, touching objects and putting things in her mouth.
- A toddler explores his ability to make music banging on pots and pans.
- A child "tries on" different roles by pretending to be a mother, a doctor, a teacher or a super hero.
- Adults explore each other's interests before pursuing a friendship.

Key messages

- Children learn through exploration.
- Children explore in countless ways.
- Exploration is natural and fun for children.
- Children want to explore everything to create prior knowledge.
- Exploration does not have to lead to a specific answer.

About exploration

Children explore for the sake of exploring. They are developing prior knowledge. Exploration creates "files" in their mind to store new information. It also builds bridges between prior knowledge and new knowledge, allowing them to transfer information from one topic to another. Exploration is an important way of making sense of our world.

Preschool children use all their senses to explore real life every day. When they start to build, measure, make things fit, compare shapes, sizes and weights, they are developing their future math skills. When they are pretending, they explore critical and logical thinking. When they are helping to make muffins, they are exploring science in the kitchen.

How does exploration affect children's lifelong learning?

When we encourage exploration in the home, we allow children to figure out their own limits, develop decision-making skills and foster healthy adult boundaries. It's essential to support exploration in early childhood. If exploration skills are not developed in early childhood, building them later on will be much more difficult.

Exploration includes discovering limits. There are many boundaries for a child to explore. Children who understand that it is okay – natural and positive – to explore, will continue to observe, inquire and discover in school and throughout life.

As we get older, exploration often takes the form of calculated risk taking. Encouraging children to explore while setting appropriate limits helps to build the foundations of confidence, security and decision making that are so important in adult life.

ACTIVITY to do with children

Bath time

Bath time is a perfect opportunity for exploration. If you have a child who loves the bath, great! If not, maybe this will make baths more fun for both of you. Let your child pick things he would like to explore while taking a bath.

Make sure they're tub-friendly. If he wants to put a cookie in the tub to see what happens, it's up to you! Include things that squirt, soak up, pour, float, sink, make noise (music), slide or stick when wet, etc. You can also use bubble bath, soap crayons, putty soap and other tub art materials.

Talk with your child about what might happen when he puts each object in the water and how he might use each object. Model exploration by touching, squeezing, looking, listening, asking questions and thinking out loud. Push a rubber duck under the water and say, "I wonder what will happen if I let go of this duck?" Let go of it and find out.

Try adapting this activity for different times and places, like the sandbox or the crib. Using the same objects several times helps your child to explore possibilities and develop prior knowledge.

TOPIC 46

Discovery

Definition

Discovery is finding out the results of behaviours and the answers to questions.

Examples

- An infant discovers that when he pushes the button on his crib toy, it squeaks.
- A toddler discovers that chocolate pudding tastes sweeter than potatoes.
- A 3-year-old discovers that she can use a stick to fish a toy out from under the couch.
- A child discovers that doing things in a certain sequence makes things easier, like putting on underwear on before jeans.
- A parent discovers that when a newborn is fussy, he is asking to be put to bed.

Key messages

- **Children are natural discoverers.**
- **New information that is discovered is added to information that the child already knows.**

About discovery

Children's natural need to explore, question and inquire results in new discoveries every day. The joy and satisfaction of discovery leads to new questions. Discovery reinforces children's desire to continue exploring and learning new things. Each thing children discover is linked to what they already know.

Think of discovery as a velcro ball. The more new information you stick to it, the bigger it gets. The bigger it gets, the easier it is to stick new information to it! If your child likes boats, each new kind of boat she discovers adds to her velcro ball of boats. The next time she discovers something new about boats, it will be easier to add it to her prior knowledge of the topic.

Children are willing to try and try again as long as they are encouraged and supported. Mistakes are just ways of discovering. Children often discover something totally unexpected when they are exploring. For example, a child might be trying to open a container and discover that it makes a nice hollow noise when he hits it. A drum! Children may play for hours with a single item. To an older preschooler, a broom can be a horse, an airplane, a magic wand, an oar... A child uses what looks to you like one object to expand knowledge of many topics.

How does discovery affect children's lifelong learning?

Children who are encouraged to discover their world become risk takers. They are able to examine things from different angles and see possibilities. Discovery is the reward for the hard work of exploring, inquiring, questioning and observing.

Discovery is both intentional and unintentional. As we get older, more of our discovery is intentional. In school, at home and in the workplace, we find answers to questions and solutions to problems through exploration, observation, inquiry and questioning. The end is different, but the means remain the same.

ACTIVITY to do with children

TV discovery

Most children spend at least some time watching TV. This activity will help you and your child find out how you can use TV for discovery.

Talk with your child about the kinds of programs she likes to watch. Together, make a simple chart that shows the type of program and how long your child spends watching it. You can include cartoons, educational, family or children's programming, and anything else you want. Record your child's TV watching habits on the chart for a week or two. Figure out how much time she spends watching each type of program.

We use only two senses watching TV– sight and hearing. Select several programs that your child likes and extend the learning to include the other three senses: smell, touch and taste. If you watch a cooking show together, try making something together in the kitchen? A program that shows children doing arts and crafts can usually be copied at home. If you're watching a show about tadpoles, see if you can find some in a nearby pond or go to a nature museum. You'll find it easier to enhance learning from some programs than from others. Is there a pattern?

TOPIC 47

Making Connections

Definition

Making connections is how we make sense of the world by linking pieces of information.

Examples

- An infant smiles at his father and the father smiles back.
- A toddler finds out that a pot can be used for cooking or for making music.
- A child begins to notice the patterns in language, adding "ed" to words when talking about the past, for example, "I swimmed in the pool."
- A child plays with a doll in the same way his parents play with him.
- You work out and eat nutritious foods because you've made the connection between these behaviours and a healthy body and lots of energy.
- When you think of Prince Edward Island, you think of Anne of Green Gables, red soil, potatoes and sandy beaches.

Key messages

- Children naturally make connections between objects, events, words, people and experiences.
- Children use a single object in different ways to learn about it and make connections to their prior knowledge.
- Pretend play is essential to making connections.

About making connections

We learn new things by gathering information through the senses and comparing it with what we already know. When children make a connection to something they already know, they are making sense of the world and combining information to create new ideas. Very early, children discover connections between different things, like a rubber ducky and the bathtub, crying and being picked up or different ways to use the same toy.

Making connections is often difficult for children because they have so little prior knowledge to use for comparison. That's why children often need to repeat the same thing many times. Children need lots of practice making connections. What might seem boring to you, like reading a favourite book over and over, helps children to make connections and "mental files" to hold new information.

Often, a child will use, watch, do or listen to a single thing over and over. It becomes a link to other things. A blanket starts off keeping the baby warm, then helps the toddler to feel secure, and later helps the preschooler gain independence when he decides it is no longer needed.

Adults who support and encourage exploration, inquiry, observation and questioning are helping children to make connections.

How does making connections affect children's lifelong learning?

From birth, children make sense of the world by seeing similarities and differences among people, events, objects, places, sounds and other experiences. Throughout life, thousands of pieces of information are recorded. For each task we do, we need to put these separate pieces of information together.

When children go to school, they constantly make connections between what they have already learned with hundreds of new experiences. When they make connections, they are transferring knowledge from one situation to another. This is how they create new ideas and ways of doing things, make plans and find solutions to problems.

ACTIVITY to do with children

The sandbox

The next time you're in the sandbox, watch your child playing. Let her direct the play, but join in as much as you can.

Playing with sand is a good way of making connections and creating new ideas. It can be used as a construction site, kitchen, town or city, science lab or artist's studio! Children use sand to make connections about shape, measurement, size, volume, proportion, texture, weight, colour, etc. Trying the same toy in different ways helps to build connections. A bucket can be used to carry or mould sand, it can be the base of a castle, a swimming pool in the castle courtyard or the drum played by the guard at the gate of the castle.

The sandbox is an empty canvas for you and your child to work with. You can use your imagination to come up with different ways to play with each toy and with the sand itself. The sand and toys can be whatever you want them to be.

Life Management

The responsibility of meeting the physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social needs of a child is a real life management issue. These topics provide you with some information and an opportunity to reflect on some important issues that relate to learning, such as eating, sleeping, stress, learning to use the toilet, relationships, self-esteem, child care, learning outside the home, television and behaviour guidance.

Eating

Christine Tripp

Eating and digestive patterns are unique to each child. Here are some guidelines:

- Babies cry or fuss when they are hungry or have digestive discomfort. They know when they're hungry and should be fed according to their own pattern.
- Children show preferences for different foods as they try new things. While their teeth are coming in, they enjoy foods that soothe their gums.
- Toddlers' appetites vary with the amount of energy they are using. They naturally want small amounts of food at various times of the day. Make sure your child gets enough fresh fruit, vegetables, grains, dairy products, protein and carbohydrates. Luckily, there are plenty of choices!
- Between 2 and 5 years old, children might change their eating patterns once in a while. They might go through a period of not wanting to eat at mealtimes or not liking

foods they liked in the past. If your child doesn't like a certain food, don't pressure her to eat it. You might have to offer a substitute to round out the meal.

Change in appetite?

Parents can think about their child's eating experiences each day and over a period of time to figure out what is causing the change or problem. Some things to consider include:

- being overtired
- a hectic mealtime
- a rushed schedule
- snacks too close to mealtime
- an upsetting event
- a health problem

Keep your approach positive. Encourage children to try new things and eat a balanced diet.

Mmmm...mealtime

For young children, positive mealtime experiences are an important part of building healthy lifetime eating habits. Regular meal times and the right amount of flavourful, interesting food will encourage them to eat.

Suggest that your children help set the table, serve themselves and scrape their own plate when they have finished. A relaxed, comfortable atmosphere with pleasant conversation will encourage children to participate.

The long-term goal is for your children to eat a balanced diet of nutritious foods and stay healthy.

Sleeping

Christine Tripp

Sleeping patterns become more regular as children grow older. A baby's sleep schedule is affected by eating patterns and the atmosphere of your home. After a while, your children will establish a routine of daytime naps and sleeping through the night. By 3 or 4 years old, most children need fewer total hours of sleep and will do well in a regular routine that suits their personal rhythm. A set bedtime is important. The amount of sleep a child needs depends on metabolism, personality, the amount of energy she uses and how much fresh air she gets.

Just relax...

Sometimes, bedtime seems like a real power struggle. Two-year-olds are exerting their own will, 3-year-olds test the limits of your patience by getting out of bed, and a 4- or 5-year-old might announce that he simply is not tired. You can help your child with the transition to bedtime by relaxing him and making it a pleasant experience.

Having a bath, picking out clothes for tomorrow, tidying up, reading a story together, listening to soft music, having a quiet talk and cuddling with a soft toy (or with you) all help children to relax and get ready for bed. A backrub or a hug and kiss can also be a consistent and secure signal that it's time to relax and go to sleep. Remember – your child needs to relax and unwind just like you do at the end of a long day!

Scared?

At about 3 years old, children develop a very vivid imagination that can keep them awake at night. Here are some things that might help:

- Help your child to understand what is real and what is imaginary by reading books together about a child who has nightmares or is afraid of the monsters under the bed. You might even want to do a "monster check" together before bedtime.
- Your child might want to crawl into bed with you when he's scared. You will need to decide if this is okay for you and strike a balance between offering comfort to your child and making sure that you both get a good night's sleep.
- A night light can help if your child is afraid of the dark.

Relationships

A child's relationships can be with parents, sisters and brothers, extended family members, friends, teachers, health care workers, caregivers and classmates. The relationships we have with other people are physical, emotional, mental, spiritual and social health resources. Children have a right to relationships. When children relate to many different people, they learn important social skills, for example, how to make friends and how to get along with others. It helps them to know that they are special and worth knowing.

Do you have a large extended family, with grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins? Do your children go to child care or a playgroup? Do you or your partner stay home with your children during the day? Do your children spend time with your adult friends and with others their own age? What do you think are the most important relationships in your children's life? The opportunities your child has to build relationships depend on your family's lifestyle.

Communicate! Some tips for active listening

Clear communication and lots of it is the most useful tool in building a close relationship with your children. Adults must be "active listeners," paying close attention to children's words, sounds, behaviour and body language. Here are some tips:

- Use words like "I hear you saying that you are sad because... Can you tell me more?" This lets your child know that you heard her. It gives her an opportunity to correct you if you didn't quite understand. It encourages her to express her own point of view.
- Use I-messages, like "I'm afraid when you climb the fence that you are going to fall and get hurt." This way, you can voice your concerns about your child's behaviour as well as your feelings about him. Children need to know that you still love them even when they are doing something you don't like.
- Children who feel acceptance and trust are more likely to express themselves openly. They feel safe knowing that you love them no matter what.

Mine!

Sharing is hard when you don't understand that you're not losing something. Very young children tend to be concerned mostly with themselves until they have more experience learning social skills and building relationships. A 2-year-old is usually more interested in "me" than in other children. By the age of 3, spending time with others helps children to learn the skills of sharing, cooperation, planning, working together and being creative.

What does play have to do with relationships?

When children role play and pretend, they learn about daily life and relationships. A child who plays with a doll may be pretending to care for a baby sister or brother. A child who stuffs a large purse with paper and pretends to be Mom leaving for work with a briefcase comes closer to an understanding of what Mom's life is like and what possibilities life holds. Children explore relationships through play, finding answers to puzzling questions and easing fears. Often, when children are upset about something, they will process the problem by acting it out or pretending.

Adult clothes, hats, shoes, phones, child-sized furniture and kitchen appliances and other props encourage imaginary and pretend play. Children play roles that they know about, for example, Mom, Dad, teacher, doctor, nurse, hairdresser and crossing guard.

Learning Outside the Home

Christine Tripp

People are learning every waking moment. We are constantly learning from people, places and things. Often, we don't realize we are learning. We begin learning at birth in a natural way through observing, exploring, inquiring and discovering. Many things are learned by "osmosis."

Remembering what we learn is a complex process (see Ways of Remembering – Module Two). We can't always recall how we learned certain things, but learning has taken place. For example, most people have learned about safety around fire. We probably can't remember how we learned because we picked up this important learning in bits and pieces, from many different sources and at different times.

We all have experiences in which things that took place in our lives years ago are suddenly remembered because of some sensory stimulus – the smell of bread, the sound of a horn, the sight of a dog. Have you ever been asked if you have seen a particular movie as a child? Do you remember it?" Chances are you'll say "No." However, watch that old movie again on TV for a few minutes and you'll remember lots about it. What do you recall when you return to your elementary school for a visit?

Researchers debate how much of our experience we store as learning. However, in ways we are only beginning to understand, our magnificent brain collects, makes sense of and stores countless life experiences and learning.

Prior to formal learning at school, children's world is their school where they come into contact with thousands of things for the first time. First experiences with anything are often most powerful and usually the best remembered. This is particularly true of young children.

Young children can't help but learn. Their brains are wired to be particularly sensitive to taking in information and using it to make sense of their world. So, treat each day of a child's life as a day of learning – learning that will last a lifetime.

Here are some places, people and situations that influence children's learning:

Extended family – grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins

Neighbourhood – recreation facilities, family resource centres, the environment

Friends – other children, adult friends, new people

Lifestyle – culture and religion, financial resources, housing

Child care – teachers and caregivers, other children, child care programs

Outings – parks and nature, trips, daily activities, museums, zoos

Child Care

Christine Tripp

Families come in many different shapes and sizes. They can have one or two parents, parents of the same sex or extended family members living in the home. One thing many families have in common is that parents work outside the home. In some cases, an extended family member like a grandparent, aunt or uncle can care for children while parents study or are at work. Often, children go outside the home for child care. Some examples are family child care, centre-based care and preschool programs.

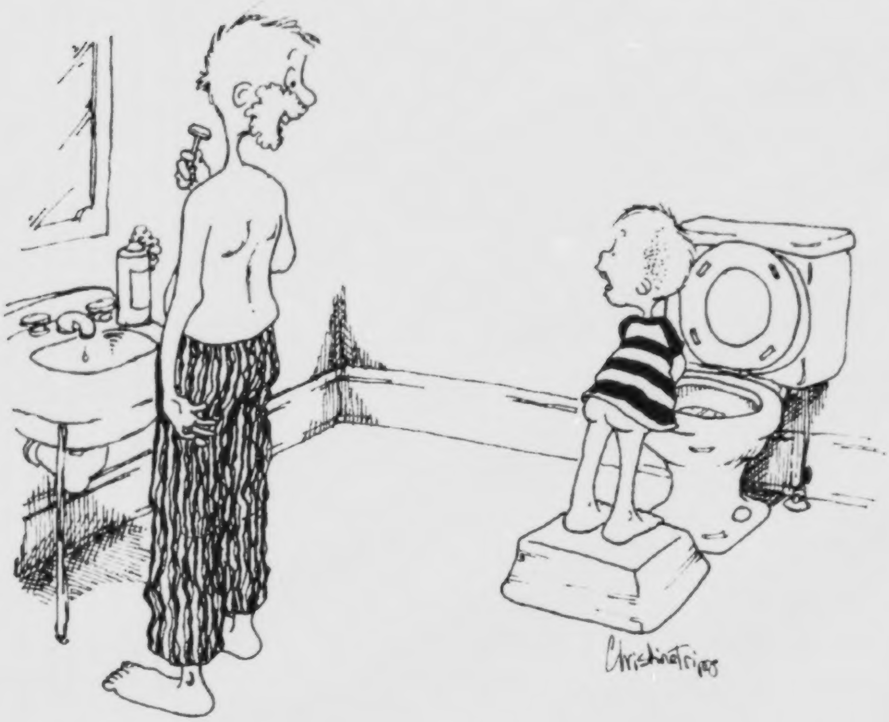
When you're choosing child care, there are lots of things to think about:

- Does the program encourage children to explore, manipulate, express themselves, be creative and have fun?
- Do the staff interact with the children in a nurturing and supportive way?
- Is the place appealing for young children, with child-sized furniture and equipment, plenty of windows, an indoor playroom and outside play area, and a safe and healthy atmosphere?

- Is the program culturally appropriate? Does it reflect a multicultural perspective?
- If your child has special needs, is the setting suitable for her growth and development?

You can visit different places before making your decision. You'll want to stay with your child at first, until you both feel comfortable separating. This might take a few days. Parents will get more information and children can get used to the teachers or caregivers and other children. Choosing child care is one of the most important decisions you'll ever make, so take your time. Child care outside the home helps children to learn social skills, make friends, get ready for the transition to school and prepare for life. It should provide a safe and nurturing environment where young children can explore and learn about their world.

Learning to Use the Toilet



This is a tough one for many parents and children. Toileting is different for each child, but the most important factor is readiness:

- Is your child physically able to control his bowels and bladder?
- Is he able to understand what is expected of him?
- Has he shown an interest in learning to use the potty or toilet?

Sometimes, learning to use the toilet is an unrealistic expectation. If a child feels pressure to use the toilet before he is ready, he might learn to be defiant or sneaky.

Until age 3, toileting should be left entirely up to your child. Some children will choose to use the toilet earlier than others and practically train themselves. Others might not show the slightest interest.

At about age 3, children will usually be curious and interested in watching others use the toilet. They might change diapers on dolls, pull their own diapers up and down, or sit on a potty. They can also learn to wash their own hands.

While learning, it is normal for a child to have ups and downs and some days will be more successful than others. Learning to use the toilet is not about "good" and "bad" behaviour. The best results will come from consistent support and encouragement.

Stress

Christine Tripp

When children experience stress, you can see it in their body language, notice it in their behaviour and hear it in their words. Sometimes it comes from within – feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem, anger or fear. Stress can also come from hectic schedules, unreasonable demands and unrealistic expectations. The things that cause stress for young children are very similar to the things that cause stress for adults:

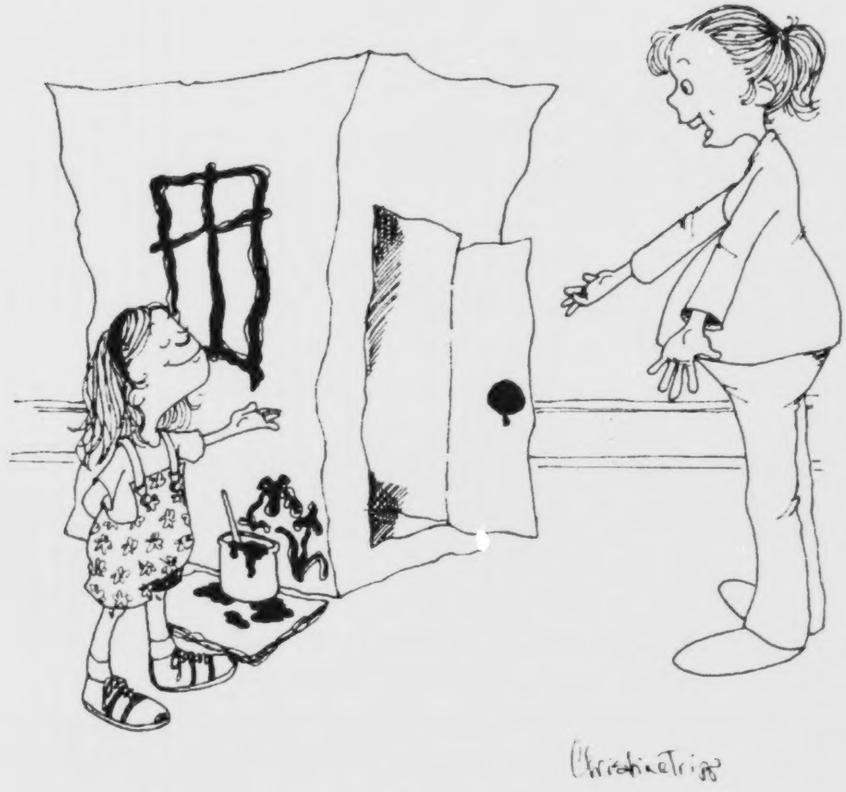
- a major change in routine, like new child care arrangements or moving to a new house
- change in family situation, like a divorce, marriage, new baby or the death of a grandparent
- pressure to achieve a goal that the child is not ready for, like toilet training or giving up a soother
- feelings of anxiety, low self-esteem, anger and fear can come from a variety of sources – neglect, lack of consistent guidelines or a traumatic event.

Children who seem stressed need the individual, focused attention of their parents. They need affection, comfort, soothing words and conversation on a regular basis to prevent stress from affecting their health and development.

Keeping things consistent in all areas of a child's life is the best way to reduce stress. Consistent routines, clear limits and guidance are important. Unconditional love and affection go a long way in easing everyday stress.

It's normal for all of us to be stressed some of the time. If your child is stressed, it doesn't mean you aren't doing a good job as a parent. Often, we don't have as much control over our lives as we would like. Do the best you can to keep the pressure off by consistently supporting, encouraging and loving your child just the way she is. Helping your child to cope with stress now will build the foundation for healthy coping skills later.

Self-Esteem



Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves. It is having a sense of self-respect and self-worth. It is whether or not we like ourselves and feel accepted by others.

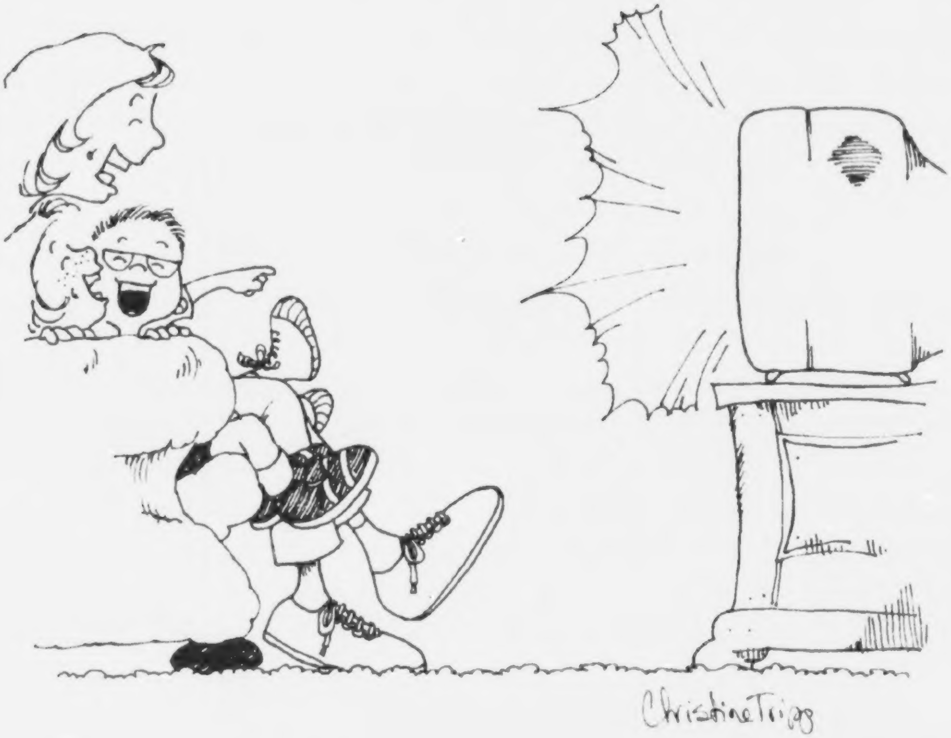
Self-esteem isn't about how many friends a child has or what kind of clothes her parents can afford to buy. Good self-esteem comes from feelings of success and competence. When we can do something well, we feel good. Allowing your child to make some of her own choices builds confidence and a sense of accomplishment. You can help by offering specific feedback like, "I really like the way you used the colours in that picture – how did you do that?" or "These cookies you made taste great – how did you make them so chewy?"

Good self-esteem is something we all want for our children. It is the key ingredient to a child's confidence, sense of purpose, ability to form healthy relationships with others, involvement in the community, and success in school and work. Self-esteem influences the decisions children make throughout life, like choosing friends, being motivated, being a leader or a follower, and setting and reaching goals.

How do children get positive self-esteem?

When children learn in infancy that the people in their world will care for, comfort, feed, protect and nurture them, the foundation for positive self-esteem is laid. When children are talked to, touched gently, soothed when they are upset, fed when they are hungry and kept warm and dry, they feel loved. From the beginning, parents can send caring messages in words and actions that lay the foundation for positive self-esteem.

Television



Television is a reality of everyday life. Even if we feel strongly about limiting TV viewing, every child is exposed to at least some TV. Sometimes plunking a child in front of the TV seems like the only way to get through an especially busy time of day.

There are lots of good things on TV. Many educational and children's programs are interesting and fun. There are also lots of other things on TV – soap operas, sitcoms, news, movies and adult dramas. It's essential to keep an eye on what your child is watching.

Watch with your child and talk together about what's on. Extend the learning to real life. Try cooking together after you watch a cooking show or find out more about dolphins after watching a show about them.

Advertising targets children. Countless ads for toys, games and movies vie for children's attention, and parents' money. Teach your child to think critically about advertising by pointing out some of the techniques advertisers use. For example, toys are often made to look better than they really are reading the fine print shows that "horse's legs do not really move" or "car cannot really jump a 3-foot ravine."

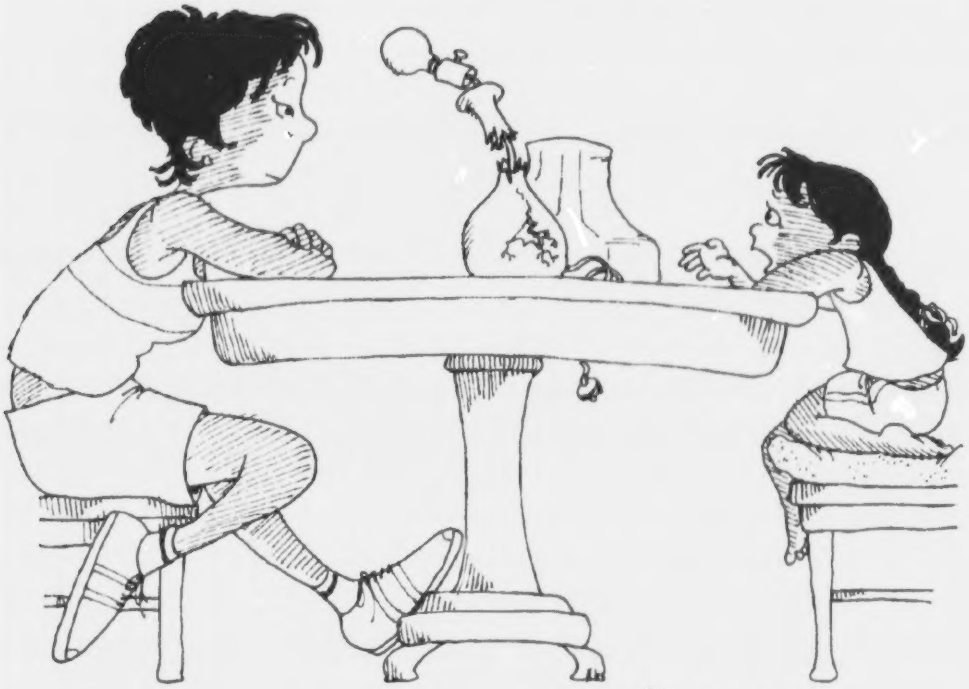
You can also ask questions, for example, "Why do they only show boys playing with those cars?" and "Why do they make the parents look so silly in that ad?" When your child is "armed" with information, he can figure out what is real and what is pretend on TV.

Tips for guiding TV viewing

- Decide how much TV your children are allowed to watch on weekdays and on weekends.
- Be clear about which times and what programs children are allowed to watch.
- Don't let TV time be saved up.
- Establish rules about tidying up, having a nap, reading, etc., before watching TV.
- Remind children that the TV is only a machine. When a show is too scary or unbelievable, they should turn it off.
- Find out what your child's thoughts and feelings are after a program is over.
- Be flexible about allowing your child to watch "specials" – these might have to be worked into the weekly TV time.
- Watch for children getting hooked by soap operas or serialized programs.
- Children get bored. Sometimes they turn on the TV because they have nothing else to do. Offer alternatives like books, games, crafts, art, playing outside and anything else you can think of!

Hint: Some of these tips are good for computer time, too!

Behaviour Guidance



Christine Tripp

Guiding your child's behaviour is a way of loving your child. A child who has clear guidelines feels secure, loved and safe to explore and learn. When you set a limit about playing near the street or eating cookies before supper, you are caring for your child.

Often, effective guidance or discipline is one of the most difficult things about parenting. Each child is different and will need limits set to suit his personality.

Some children respond well when you just explain a guideline. Others might also need to be shown an alternative or be redirected.

When you set reasonable limits for your child, she will eventually learn to set her own limits and make good choices.

A close and trusting relationship with your child makes discipline much easier for both of you. Your role is to provide loving guidance by explaining why a rule is in place, setting consistent limits, providing alternatives to a problem behaviour and setting a good example.

Most parents learn to be parents by trial and error. You don't learn to be a parent in school, and the greatest influence on your parenting style is usually your own parents – how you were brought up yourself.

When you have a family of your own, your notions of guidance might clash with your spouse or partner's. You compromise and come up with a system of guidance that works in your family. This system will probably grow and change over the years and with each child.

Over the past few decades, how people discipline their children has changed. Most people no longer use physical punishment. A more democratic style of parenting is common and most parents feel that clear communication and using alternatives are very effective.

Children need to know that you love them even if you don't like something they have done or said.

Parenting styles

There are three basic parenting styles:

Authoritarian – "I'm the boss"
An authoritarian parent will demand obedience and make decisions on behalf of the child. This parent will not welcome input or be flexible. The message to the child is "Do it now or else." The child will probably grow up either not wanting to make decisions, being submissive to others, or being defiant and rebellious against authority.

Permissive – "You're on your own"
A permissive parent allows the child to make all her own decisions and learn by the consequences of her behaviour. This parent provides little or no guidance. The message to the child is that she has the right to do as she pleases. The child is likely to feel she has the right to make all her own decisions and might make several unwise choices before learning "the hard way." She might eventually avoid making any decisions at all.

Authoritative – "We're in this together"
An authoritative parent falls between the first two. This parent encourages the child to make his own decisions, but provides some information to help the child make that decision — for example, "If you choose to do it this way, these are the possible results..." The child will feel motivated to make choices and will learn to take responsibility for his actions. When children feel a positive sense of self-esteem and have loving guidance, they are more likely to experience the world as a good place to be, with lots of opportunities for success and learning. This is the basis for emotional and social well-being.

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Notes

Canadian Child Care Federation
Suite 201, 383 Parkdale Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4R4
Phone: (613) 729-5289; 1 800 858-1412
Fax: (613) 729-3159; Email: cccf@cfc-efc.ca
www.cfc-efc.ca/cccf

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Early Learning Canada

TRAINER MANUAL

LEARNING & READING PARTNERS ADULT LEARNING SYSTEM

Early Learning Canada
Trainer Manual

ISBN # 0 9688294 3 3

Early Learning Canada is a community workshop program designed for parents and adults who work with young children from birth to age 6 and their families. Its purpose is to facilitate lifelong learning. The program was developed during a 30-month project that began in October 1998; resources include a Participant Resource, a Workshop Leader Guide and a Trainer Manual.

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Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System

CCCF Project Management Team:
Barbara Coyle, Robin Kealey

Authors:
Learning & Reading Partners Adult Learning System
Nancy Estey, Maitland MacIsaac, Sandra Rendell

Illustrator:
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Design:
Fairmont House Design

Editing:
Karin Lynch, Judith Whitehead

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Gilmore Global Logistics Services

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Smart Communication

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Advisors
Beth Allan
Heather Brown
Elaine Cairns
Kim Crockatt
Sharon Fotheringham
Mary Gallagher
Ann Gauvin
Chris Gay
Anne Joyce
Barbara Kaiser
Beverley Kirby
Linda Mace
Heather MacKenzie
Laureen Mackenzie
Elizabeth Mann
Cathy McCormack
Sue McCormack
Claire McNab
Keith Morgan
Trudy Norton
Marg Rodrigues
Mona Rowland
Janet Shively
Carolyn Simpson
Alice Taylor
Marilyn Goodyear Whiteley

Pilot Workshop Leaders
Joanne Boyd
Doreen Cowin
Lise Beauchemin-Crousette
Andrea Gingras
Robin Kealey
Vicki Laframboise
Caroline Landry
Karen Luker
Cathy McCormack
Anne Ricard
Brenda Rioux
Linda Mace

Prince Edward Island Literacy Alliance
Erin Casey
Dianne Morrow
Catherine O'Bryan

Pilot Trainers
Lucille Ademeck
Linda Aihoshi
Christine Ambrose
Lise Beauchemin
Rick Dillon
Cécile Gallant
Sylvia Jacobsen
Janeen Jones
Donna Kilbach
Fleurette Landry
Lori Lawson
Eileen Myers
Deb Mytruk
Barry Nadolny
Joan Nadolny
Ann Peltier
Jennifer Pirot-McMillan
Joanne Renas
Sylvie Scarf
Coco Schau
Yasmin Shariff
Lynn Smyth

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Contents

Introduction 3

The Role of the Workshop Leader Trainer 4

Enhancing the Learning of Adults 5
Motivation 5
The Adult as a Resource to Self and Others 6
The Role of Prior Knowledge 7
Lifelong Learning as a Continuum of Learning 8
Personality 8
Multisensory Learning 9
Emotions and Learning 9
Learning Styles 9
Multiple Intelligences 10
TALK 10

Setting Up Workshop Leader Training 12
Making Contacts 12
Advertising 12
Location 12
Resource Ordering Process 12
Nutrition Breaks 13
Materials Needed 13
Agendas 13
Team Building 14
Participation 14
Accommodations, Travel and Meals 14
Evaluations 14

Marketing and Promotion 15

Facilitating Workshop Leader Training 23

Order of Workshop Agenda Items 24
Section 1: Building Group Capacity 24
- Gathering Information 24
- Forming Teams for the Workshop 24
- Becoming Familiar with the *Participant Resource* (white pages) in the *Workshop Leader Guide* 25
- Sharing Information About the *Participant Resource* 26
- Whole Group Introductions 27

Section 2: Philosophy of Early Learning Canada 27
- Understanding That People Bring Resources to Each Task 27
- Enhancing the Meaning of the Early Learning Canada Principles 28
Section 3: Explaining the Five Step Method 29
Section 4: Modelling How to Lead a Module 31
Section 5: Practising a Module 31
- Preparing 31
- Leading 32
- Debriefing 32
Section 6: Modelling the Learning Activity for Topic 26 32
Section 7: Evaluations and Workshop Logistics 33
- Evaluations 33
- Workshop Logistics 34
Section 8: Conclusion 34

Resources and Handouts:

ELC Order Form
ELC Workshop Leader Contact Information
ELC Workshop Leader Training Agenda Overview
ELC Workshop Leader Personal Profile
Becoming Familiar with the *Participant Resource*
ELC Parent Resource Graph
ELC Workshop Leader Resource Graph
Enhancing the Meaning of the ELC Principles
ELC Resource Graph
(1—5) Five Step Handouts
Parent Weekly Assignment
Topic 26: Learning Activity Model for Chart
Topic 26: Learning Activity Sample Responses
ELC Workshop Leader Evaluation Form
ELC Participant Evaluation Form
ELC Workshop Leader Feedback Form
Next Steps for the Trained ELC Workshop Leader

Introduction

Early Learning Canada (ELC) is based on the understanding that the capacity to learn is optimized in the early years of life.

To do this most effectively requires interaction with others. All society has the responsibility to practise the African proverb "It takes a whole village to raise a child." One way is for communities to have programs available that give them information and strategies to assist children to become successful, lifelong learners. ELC is such a program.

ELC is based on the following principles:

- Parents have an essential role in their children's lifelong learning.
- Parents are the primary educators of their young children.
- Parents have the capacity to educate their young children.
- Parents are not alone as their children's primary teacher, because the whole community has responsibilities for raising children.

These principles are discussed further in Section 2.

The Role of the Workshop Leader Trainer

Workshop leader trainers have two primary roles:

- to motivate and recruit people to take ELC Workshop Leader Training
- to provide high quality Workshop Leader Training sessions

Workshop leader trainers are chosen because they have demonstrated their abilities in both these areas.

The success of ELC depends on volunteers, so being able to show people why they would want to become involved with the program is key. ELC appeals to both the "head" and the "heart" - its high quality material engages people at the intellectual level, while its message of helping parents and others to help young children engages people's emotions. Workshop leader trainers need to keep both "head" and "heart" in mind during program promotion and training.

Workshop leader trainers have demonstrated a commitment to the families and children of Canada. Learning and Reading Partners Adult Learning System (LRPALS) and the Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF) depend on you to breathe "life" into the program and to pass this "life" on to those you train. There has been a national and international awakening regarding the essential role parents have in their children's learning. ELC is a vehicle to strengthen this message – by providing parents with knowledge, skills and strategies to be more actively engaged in their child's early learning.

We refer to workshop leaders and trainers as ELC's "Dream Team." Our dream of reaching tens of thousands of parents will happen because of your time, dedication and effort. We thank you, the parents and those involved in different ways with young children. Above all, the children thank you.

Enhancing the Learning of Adults

Workshop Leader Training sessions are based on several important concepts about adult learning. Here is information that will give you an overall understanding of these principles and guide you as you present the training.

Motivation

For adults to be motivated, they need to see "What's in it for me?"

According to psychiatrist William Glasser (refer to reading list in *Participant Resource*), every one of us has basic needs for:
- love and belonging
- power
- freedom
- fun
- survival

Everything we do is an attempt to get those needs met. That is, we are **motivated** to do things that we believe will help us satisfy those needs.

What motivates people to take ELC Workshop Leader Training, a program that prepares them to help parents assist their children with learning? It certainly isn't the money, so it's not survival! Usually, people are satisfying a combination of the other four needs:
- love and belonging (caring, sharing, involvement, community service, having parents' gratitude, being part of a support network)
- power (getting respect and recognition, developing skills, feeling important, having an impact)
- freedom (having choices, being independent)
- fun (pleasure, enjoyment, learning new things)

Psychologist Madeline Hunter (refer to reading list in *Participant Resource*) has identified certain factors that affect motivation:
- concern (People are motivated when they feel unsatisfied with the status quo.)
- feeling tone (People need a positive, non-threatening environment.)
- interest (People are interested in what is personally relevant and in things that are a novelty.)
- success (When people are successful at something, they want to keep doing it.)
- positive feedback (Honest, specific, non-judgmental comments are motivational.)
- rewards (People are more motivated by intrinsic rewards – getting basic needs met – than by external rewards such as money.)

As trainers, we need to keep all this information about motivation in mind as we facilitate the Workshop Leader Training. We also need to consider these factors when providing a support system for the workshop leaders.

Here are some strategies to use during the Workshop Leader Training to provide an environment in which participants will feel motivated.
- Give workshop leaders respect and recognition as valuable resources to the group and to the parents they will be leading.
- Don't put people "on the spot" to answer questions or participate. Always allow people to "pass" if they wish.

- Always "dignify" an answer, even if it isn't the one you were expecting, by responding with a comment that connects it to what you are talking about.
- Make the learning relevant to the workshop leaders' lives. Encourage people to make connections with their work and personal lives.
- Provide positive feedback as workshop leaders share their resources with you and others.
- Ensure that activities are set up so that workshop leaders will be successful.
- Provide lots of opportunities for participants to interact and share their resources, both during the sessions and during breaks and meal times. Have participants work with partners or groups to do activities and to discuss the topics.
- Provide name cards (lapel stickers and stand-up desktop cards that can be read from a distance).
- Make sure workshop leaders have fun! Create an atmosphere where people's natural humour comes out.
- Provide lots of hands-on, whole-body activities.
- Provide frequent breaks – this not only makes people more comfortable and allows a sense of freedom, but also increases the learning.
- Provide drinking water – for both health and learning reasons. The brain needs water to function.

You can also put in place some mechanisms that will help workshop leaders get some of their needs met, so they will be motivated to continue to share the program with parents. For example:

- send a newsletter and program updates periodically
- encourage workshop leaders to keep in contact with each other to share ideas, or to support each other in leading the program

The Adult as a Resource to Self and Others

ELC is based on the belief that parents are a tremendous resource to their children. Sometimes, they just need to become more aware of how rich a resource they already are. ELC is also designed to provide parents with additional resources in the form of information and strategies to help their children with learning.

A resource-based model helps people to:

- recognize their present resources (skills and abilities)
- realize the implications of having those resources
- use their present resources
- get new resources, if needed

Because of their life experiences, adults have prior knowledge about many things. So adults already have many resources, but may not recognize them. Capacity building often involves helping adults see their life experiences as a resource and encouraging them to use these present resources. Adults can then decide whether or not they wish to add to their present resources.

Adults' life experiences also affect the way they view the world and give them their own "personal filter." Adults use this personal filter in deciding if and what they want to learn. Adult learners make choices about what they want or need to learn for their own situation.

The following activity demonstrates these concepts.

ACTIVITY
The Minimum-Maximum Activity

The wall on one side of the room indicates "minimum resources." Another wall several metres away represents "maximum resources." Tape a string from one wall to the other. This "resource line" provides a way for people to indicate how many resources they believe they have in certain areas. There is no zero on this line, because no one is totally without resources.

Participants place themselves on the resource line in response to several questions, such as:
- "What resources do you have at the present time to play the piano?"
- "What resources do you have at the present time to cook a gourmet meal?"
- "What resources do you have at the present time to run the Boston Marathon?"

People will move to different spots on the line, from minimum to maximum, depending on the resources they believe they have in each of these areas. For example, a person who has minimum resources in playing the piano may have maximum resources in running a race.

While people are still standing in the place that indicates their present resources to run the Boston Marathon, they are asked to move to show how many resources they would like to have to be able to run it. Some will move up the line; some will stay where they are; probably very few will move all the way up to indicate that they want maximum resources in this area. As adults, we don't want or need to have maximum resources in every area of our lives. We may have only minimal resources in certain areas and that's just fine! Adults choose the resources they wish to acquire, based on their own personal filter, their own needs and desires.

The point is to recognize the resources we do have and use them effectively. Then, if we do decide we want more resources, we know we are adding to what we already have, not starting from zero.

The Role of Prior Knowledge

We learn and remember new information best if we can associate it with something we already know (prior knowledge). First-hand sensory experience is best. For example, I will understand and remember an article on migraine headaches better if I have experienced one myself.
But sometimes, we can make a connection to something similar and that helps us to learn. For example, when explaining something to another person we often try to "hook" into their prior knowledge of a similar thing by saying, "It's like..."

Adults come to any learning situation with a wealth of life experiences – both positive and negative. Prior knowledge is a resource. As workshop leaders, we help parents recognize their present knowledge and resources, and show them how to use their knowledge to benefit themselves and their children. Much of the information in the ELC program reflects what "parents know, but may not know they know." Our job is to bring this knowledge to a level of awareness where it can be consciously used.

One way to help people learn new information is to make it relevant to their own lives; to connect the new information to their prior knowledge. For this reason, throughout each ELC session, parents are invited to discuss their own children and real-life examples (especially during the Briefing part of the Experiencing Learning Cycle, see p. 30).

Parents usually have the best knowledge of their own child and his or her needs. They are their child's first and most important teacher. As they participate in the ELC program, many will find reassurance and confidence that they are already doing many good things with their child. They will also be able to share their prior knowledge with and learn from other parents who, in turn, become resources. Each session makes special provision for this during the Debriefing part of the Experiencing Learning Cycle (see p. 30).

Lifelong Learning as a Continuum of Learning

The ELC program is designed to provide the foundation for a child's learning throughout life. When children – or adults – learn and experience new things, they always connect this new information to their prior knowledge. This in turn affects their learning filter and what they choose to learn, and how easily they learn it. Because of their wealth of prior knowledge to which they can hook new information, adults may not need as much repetition as children to remember certain things.

Some ELC information will be new to parents, and they will acquire as much as they feel they need or want. The program gives parents an overview of their child's learning, so they can link the pieces of what they know to the big picture. Understanding the big picture then becomes part of their prior knowledge, to which they can hook future information about their role in their child's lifelong learning.

Personality

Each person who comes to the Workshop Leader Training will have a unique personality. When these individuals come together to form working teams, these teams will also have their own "personality."

Individuals (and teams) may be outgoing or reserved. While outgoing individuals or teams may seem easier to work with because they give you lots of feedback, those who are quieter and more reserved are usually just as involved and committed.

Try to create a safe, accepting and respectful environment for all personality types. Wherever possible, accommodate people's individual styles and needs within the team setting.

Multisensory Learning

ELC workshops are designed to provide hands-on, multisensory learning activities for both parents and children. Recent research has shown that we learn and remember best when we involve our whole body and use as many senses as possible.

Multisensory, whole-body learning helps us to remember. When we experience something through several senses, more bits of information are stored in various places in the brain, so it is easier to recall the information when we need it. More associations make the memory easier to retrieve.

Hands-on learning is more brain compatible than textbook learning, because it engages our natural ways of remembering things (refer to reading list in *Participant Resource* – Jensen, 1996).

Emotions and Learning

Jensen (1996, p. 39) also stated that "Learning and meaning are driven by feelings; the brain is virtually a box of emotions." Research about learning and the brain has revealed that the emotional part of the brain (limbic system) is inseparably involved in what the cognitive part of the brain (neocortex) learns (Jensen, 1996). Since the emotions are a survival mechanism to let us know if we are safe or in danger, the emotional brain will "hijack" the thinking brain if the learner feels threatened or upset. A person is not able to learn while experiencing negative emotions (for example, anger, frustration, fear, annoyance) during a learning situation. For learning to take place, positive emotions must be engaged. A positive, safe, stimulating, interactive, multisensory environment provides the best opportunities for learning to occur.

Learning Styles

The goal of workshop leaders is to optimize learning opportunities for every parent who attends the workshops. Understanding that parents may have certain preferred ways of learning can help workshop leaders make the experience rewarding for everyone.

Everyone learns through all their senses – and the more senses we are able to use the better we will learn. However, most people prefer one or more of the senses over the others. People usually fall into three categories of preferences:

- visual learners (learn best by watching)
- auditory learners (learn best by listening)
- kinesthetic-tactile (learn best by moving and touching)

Since we tend to teach in our own preferred style, we should be aware of our own preferences as well as realize that any group we work with will include a range of preferences. Sometimes when a person seems not to be learning, it is because there is a mismatch between his or her learning style and that of the person who is presenting the material. This can lead to frustration on both sides (as can often happen between parent and child).

Everyone will have the advantage of learning through their preferred sense(s) if what is to be learned is presented in a multisensory way. ELC encourages workshop leaders to involve parents at every opportunity through watching, listening, moving and touching.

Multiple Intelligences

For many years, our concept of "intelligence" was limited to believing that if a person was good at reading and math – that is, successful at school – that person was smart. However, there are many different ways of being smart (refer to reading list in *Participant Resource*, Gardner, 1983). Gardner has identified at least seven types of intelligences, which all of us have in varying degrees. These intelligences are:

- logical-mathematical (math smart)
- linguistic (word smart)
- spatial-visual (picture smart)
- musical-rythmical (music smart)
- bodily-kinesthetic (body smart)
- interpersonal (people smart)
- intrapersonal (self smart)

This expanded view of intelligence is very positive and encouraging. If parents are aware that their child has potential in many areas, they are more likely to provide opportunities for these intelligences to emerge. Encouraging the development of a child's natural intelligences allows the child to feel successful. This enhances self-esteem and puts the child in a positive frame of mind – and ready to try new tasks.

Similarly, if while working with adults, we take advantage of each person's many different intelligences, we may increase their learning, motivation and self-esteem. An activities-based approach allows and encourages everyone to use their various intelligences. For example, someone with strong bodily intelligence will probably learn better and get more enjoyment out of getting up and moving along a resource line than using a marker on a page.

Emotional intelligence has also been identified as being extremely important (refer to reading list in *Participant Resource*, Goleman, 1995). A growing body of evidence shows that success in school and in life depends on emotional characteristics formed in the years before a child enters school. The fundamental components of emotional intelligence are social skills, managing feelings, motivation, empathy and self-awareness. Goleman believes that these qualities and skills can and should be taught by parents, teachers and others.

TALK

TALK is the acronym for the four essential components of learning – Thinking, Attitudes, Language and Knowledge. The following activity demonstrates how we use each of these components.

The learning concepts of TALK are an integral part of the ELC program, in both the Workshop Leader Training sessions and in the community workshops. (See TALK – Topic 2 – in *Participant Resource)*.

ACTIVITY
Solving the Popsicle Problem

Participants work in pairs or small groups. Each group is given five popsicle sticks and challenged to learn what they need to do to lift all five popsicle sticks at once by holding on to only one stick.

There are many solutions to this problem. Participants share with the group the various ways they solved it.

Participants discuss the **thinking strategies** they had to use in relation to TALK.

Such an activity can help participants realize the importance of **attitude** in learning. Attitude refers to feelings and motivation. Research has shown that the emotions must be engaged for learning to occur, but the thinking part of the brain cannot attend to learning if the person is feeling threatened or angry. We are motivated when something gives us pleasure and meets our needs for love and belonging, power, freedom and fun (refer to reading list in *Participant Resource*, Glasser, 1998). We learn only when we want to or have to; and we learn best when we want to.

Participants also needed **language** in this activity. They had to **speak** and **listen** to each other as they shared ideas. In many other learning situations, they might also have to **read** and **write**. Most learning requires the ability to understand words and their meanings and to use the four components of language.

If there is some prior **knowledge** of the topic, there is a place for the new information to "stick." In this activity, participants used their prior knowledge of popsicle sticks, of balance, of following directions, and cooperating, etc.

Setting Up Workshop Leader Training

This section will give you some guidelines to follow in setting up Workshop Leader Training sessions.

Making Contacts

People who are interested in taking Workshop Leader Training are likely to be those who have commitments to young children and families. Some are:

- early childhood educators
- family resource professionals
- school teachers
- church representatives
- government agencies (early intervention specialists, childhood social workers)
- public health nurses
- speech-language pathologists and audiologists
- members of provincial/territorial learning disabilities associations and local chapters

Advertising

You could advertise your training session at:

- conference presentations
- bulletin boards (resource centres, health care organizations, schools, churches)
- newsletters of early childhood and health care organizations, etc.

Location

Training can be held wherever there is leadership to set up a workshop and enough interested people.

If out-of-town participants will be attending, the location must be easy for them to reach by public transportation.

The location must be an appropriate size for the expected number of participants. Since participants spend much of the time working in teams, it is important that the facility be large enough to allow large team activities. A key part of the training involves each group leading a module within their team, so ideally break-out rooms should be available so noise does not become a problem.

Provide a phone number for workshop leaders so they can tell others where they can be reached.

Resource Ordering Process

Order books and other materials for workshop leaders **at least 6 weeks in advance.** (See Resources and Handouts.) Books and posters are ordered directly from:

Canadian Child Care Federation (CCCF)
383 Parkdale Avenue, Suite 201
Ottawa, ON K1Y 4R4
Tel: 1-800-858-1412
Fax: (613) 729-3159
Email: cccf@cfc-efc.ca

During training, ask the workshop leaders to fill out the ELC Workshop Leader Contact

Information form (see Resources and Handouts) for our database so they can be sent materials, newsletters, etc. This contact information should be shared with the whole group for networking. (Ask permission to share this information. Occasionally, people have unlisted phone numbers or are uncomfortable with sharing home information.)

Nutrition Breaks

Breaks are an important part of the day. A break allows participants to stretch, snack, use the washroom and network informally.

The food and drinks you provide will depend on funding and availability, but if possible arrange for a variety of nutritious snacks. People concentrate better when they are not hungry; their attitudes are affected by the kind of food provided.

You are responsible for organizing the lunches. You may ask the workshop leaders to bring their own or you may wish to have lunches catered. This gives you the option of having a shorter lunch break and to finish the day earlier.

Materials Needed

The following materials should be ordered (see Resources and Handouts) from the CCCF **at least 6 weeks** before your planned Workshop Leader Training date:

- Workshop Leader Guides
- ELC posters
  - Welcome to ELC
  - ELC Principles
  - Experiencing Learning Cycle
  - PAT
- Workshop Leader Certificates

The masters for your own teaching aids or material to be photocopied for your workshop leaders are provided in the Resources and Handouts section of this *Trainer Manual.*

Other teaching aids you will need to collect before training include:

- map
- coloured dots
- name tags
- camera (Polaroid if possible)
- film for camera (enough to take photo of each participant)
- plastic sleeves for profiles
- chart paper
- coloured markers (for chart, profiles and name tags)
- large ball of yarn
- Shoe Box Fun materials (three boxes – A, B, and C)

Agendas

There are two possible time frames for the 14-hour training workshop.

Option 1:	one evening (3 hours), one full day (7 hours) and one morning (4 hours)
Option 2:	two full days (7 hours each)

Workshop leaders have the option of offering training on a weekend (Friday evening, all day Saturday, and Sunday morning) or in two full days during the week. While the content of the training remains the same, the times that sections are presented may be different.

Provide the appropriate agenda (Option 1 or Option 2) to help the participants orient themselves to the topics and materials. (See

Resources and Handouts.) The agenda outlines topics, activities and time lines.

Team Building

The workshop leaders will appreciate support from each other. The Workshop Leader Training involves team-building activities which encourage sharing and support when leaders deliver the program in their communities. Workshop leaders who will be partnering with someone in their community should work with this person throughout the training sessions if possible.

Team-building strategies and activities during the Workshop Leader Training are designed to provide:

- opportunities for working together as partners and teams
- positive feedback to participants
- informal sharing times, such as breaks and lunches
- formal sharing times ("Debriefing" at the end of each day gives participants opportunities to give and receive feedback, to share experiences, to thank each other, and form bonds.)

Participation

ELC is designed to be an interactive, hands-on, activity-oriented program for parents. Workshop leaders need to experience this same multisensory, participatory approach. When participants are fully involved (mentally, physically and emotionally), they will:

- learn more effectively
- remember what they have learned
- understand the importance of using a multisensory, participatory approach with parents
- have a model of how to facilitate the program with parents
- feel more ownership of the program
- enjoy the Workshop Leader Training

Accommodations, Travel and Meals

Accommodations, travel and meals are the responsibility of the workshop leaders. If possible, send a tourist-type package of information before the training to workshop leaders about hotels, restaurants, maps, local places of interest, etc.

Evaluations

Evaluation information is provided separately in Section 7 (see page 33).

Marketing and Promotion

The contents of this section are designed to be used:

- by LRPALS as part of the content of workshop leader trainer institutes
- by trainers to attract workshop leaders and as part of Workshop Leader Training
- by workshop leaders to attract participants to take ELC training workshops

It is recommended that workshop leader trainers photocopy the pages on Marketing and Promotion and provide them to each workshop leader.

The following section is designed to provide information to workshop leaders and others to assist them in marketing ELC.

As workshop leader trainers and workshop leaders, you have the responsibility of attracting participants from your area for your workshops. To do so successfully requires some understanding of marketing.

The marketing information is presented in marketing points or guidelines. This will help you think of the marketing content in related concepts and categories rather than as a long list of disconnected information.

Marketing Point One

Don't expect people to take the workshops just because ELC is good

Hundreds of thousands of families in Canada could benefit from taking ELC and other parent programs. For example, approximately 350,000 babies were born in Canada in 1997. Even if there were 10,000 families of these children taking ELC training, it would still be only 3 percent of this population.

ELC is an excellent program that is full of valuable information. However, we would be naive if we think that because "we have built it they will come." While demographics show that there is a large potential parent audience in Canada for ELC, the reality is that many parents do not take parenting courses. Two important reasons for this are:

- Most parents with young children believe that the "important" children's learning begins when they enter school. The recent surge of media and government attention to the early years is just the beginning of what will be required to create a major shift in thinking about the importance of the early years and the role of parents as their children's "brain builders."

- Many parenting programs seem to come from a "deficit" perspective. In other words, the misperception is that those who take a parent program must lack parenting skills. It is important to stress that ELC is an "every parent" program. Never present ELC as a program for "at-risk" parents. If you do this even once, there will be little chance of recovering from this negative perception.

Part of our job must be to get the word out to parents of the importance and impact of their role. A cultural shift is needed in our society so that the role of parent as educator/teacher becomes the norm. When this happens, programs such as ELC will be in high demand.

Marketing Point Two

Marketing is not selling

Marketing is the **plan** you develop to sell a product and/or a service. How you sell depends on several factors, including audience, product, money, time, reason for selling, expertise and motivation. Before selling the ELC product, workshop leader trainers and workshop leaders need to develop a plan to attract their audience. You may find that the audience is readily available and little or no marketing is required. However, in most instances a considerable amount of market planning is required.

Think of selling as putting the plan into action. It may take weeks or months to develop a marketing plan that is put into action (selling) for a short time.

The ELC product is considerably more complex than a type of soft drink or a type of automobile. ELC is an "approach" to teaching and learning, a philosophy, knowledge enhancement, and a series of essential strategies to help children learn.

This means that marketing the ELC product needs to be done in a variety of ways. Some of the approaches will be generic, others will depend on the intended audience. Buyers (participants) will get involved for a variety of reasons, ranging from an affirmation of their present beliefs and knowledge to a minimal awareness of the content. For example, if your audience is drawn from families with children in kindergarten you may want a strategy that talks about the role of parents in school readiness. If your audience is primarily parents prenatal through age 2, the emphasis may be on the role of parents in early language development.

In summary, think of **marketing** as the plan you develop to get participants to "buy" your product. **Selling** ELC is the actual delivery/implementation of your marketing plan.

Marketing Point Three

Marketing requires a consistent message

Marketing requires a consistent message that is easily remembered by the intended audience. For this reason, all marketing plans should radiate from the ELC principles. These four principles should be obvious within the messages that are developed as part of the marketing plan.

Message 1:
PARENTS HAVE AN ESSENTIAL ROLE
Principle: Parents have an essential role in their children's lifelong learning.

Message 2:
PARENTS ARE EDUCATORS
Principle: Parents are the primary educators of their young children.

Message 3:
PARENTS CAN DO IT
Principle: Parents have the capacity to educate their young children, even if they don't always realize that they have this capacity.

Message 4:
COMMUNITIES HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY
Principle: Parents are not alone as their young children's primary teacher. The whole community has responsibilities for raising children.

Marketing Point Four

People want to believe you

ELC is a top quality product. Remember that you, the workshop leader trainer (or workshop leader), are part of the total ELC product. If participants view you positively, the ELC program will also be viewed as quality. The slickest marketing campaign can't accomplish half of what the enthusiasm of an honest, committed person who is promoting the program from the heart can do. Share your belief and your passion for the program.

Marketing Point Five

People remember stories, not lists

Across Canada, parents are telling workshop leaders that this program has made an incredible difference in their lives. These stories are powerful and always make a positive impact. Even the workshop leaders have reported that the ELC program has influenced their belief system and their actions at work, at home and in the community.

Quote the nuggets of belief, success and enthusiasm that have been provided by CCCF and LRPALS. Share them in conversations, in presentations, in letters and in promotional materials. Talk about the program and how it has had an impact on your life and your work.

Marketing Point Six

People respond positively to respect and appreciation

Participants don't have to come to Workshop Leader Training. They're voluntary consumers, even if they come from an agency or organization. Be appreciative of the workshop leaders' decision to invest their time, money and energy in taking ELC training.

Treating people with respect is an extremely important part of marketing. Whether you're making a presentation, delivering flyers or talking to a prospective workshop leader, remember to be respectful and appreciative of the person's situation.

Some examples of ways to demonstrate respect and appreciation are:

Do what you say you're going to do, when you say you're going to do it.
People who take the different ELC workshops quickly form an opinion of the person who is delivering the workshop. You won't have much time to correct first impressions, so don't place yourself in a situation where you make commitments you're not likely to be able to honour. People will understand if there is a legitimate reason for your inability to follow through, but may feel let down otherwise.

Be an effective listener.
Listen to what people are saying and feeling. Maintain eye contact, give them undivided attention when they're speaking to you, don't interrupt and show them that you understand them. There are many books and articles about effective listening if you want to learn more.

Be positive.
People don't want to hear negative things or complaints. Research has found that the brain's functioning and ability to learn is adversely affected by negativity. So make people feel uplifted!

Recognize and honour the resources people have within themselves – try to empower everyone you meet! It's one of the principles of human relationships. People who leave you feeling enriched will also have developed a positive impression of what you talked about.

Be non-judgmental.
You may be surprised, even shocked, at comments parents may make about their beliefs and knowledge. Don't laugh, criticize or make fun of people's level of knowledge. We're here to empower parents, not belittle them. ELC isn't a forum for you to share your personal beliefs and values. Remember to stick to the content of the course.

Be humble.
Be careful not to present yourself as an expert. If you sound too authoritative, people will be reluctant to share their insights. You have information and knowledge to share with participants, but so do they. We're all learners together.

Marketing Point Seven

People are attracted to something they perceive as current

The ideas and messages of ELC are not new. Parents have always had the responsibility of educating their children. However, ELC is a new way of addressing the topic of the parent as a child's first teacher and is based on current knowledge about how children learn. Workshop leaders have the opportunity to place these messages about the role of parents as their child's first teacher in the public's mind.

We want people to think of ELC as a solution for parent education. We want them to see ELC as a powerful resource for parents to assist their young children be successful as children, succeed in society, succeed in school and succeed in the workplace.

Marketing Point Eight

People usually understand the big picture through specific examples

While ELC has much good material to share, it's often better to talk about a single strategy first and then tie it in to the program. Take opportunities to discuss specific strategies that you know may interest an individual or group. Then talk about the complete program. As an example, a discussion about the amount of speaking vocabulary a baby has can be a great lead-in to the concept of children's language development.

Keep in mind that the very words "parent program" may alienate some people. If you talk about specific content that people can relate to, you may have a better chance of attracting interest than if you were to talk about the complete program in a general way.

Remember, the promotion of ELC is a process that takes time. Many people have tried to get parents more involved with their children's learning, often with limited success. To expect that ELC is suddenly going to have the majority of parents taking the program is unrealistic. Much work lies ahead to achieve a cultural shift in which parents naturally accept their role as their child's first teacher. So, keep the messages focused, specific and, as much as possible, concrete and pragmatic. Using the experiences of others by asking them to share their experiences is a powerful way to get your message out.

People's perception is their reality. People have to see the benefit of taking ELC before they will "purchase the product." Many an excellent product has not been successful because people did not see how it could meet their needs. We would like workshop leaders to spend time creating a perception of ELC as a quality program – one that will make a real difference in the lives of parents and in the lives of their child.

If people clearly see "what's in it for them," they are more likely to become involved. It's human nature to look for things to answer our needs. Instead of looking at things through your eyes only, try looking through theirs and ask, "How can being trained in ELC benefit this person?" It may meet a person's values as an educator or parent, prepare for the birth of a baby, give knowledge about a specific topic, etc.

Marketing Point Nine

Be careful that you do not speak negatively about other programs

You never know how what you're saying is being interpreted by others. The program you're giving your opinion on may have been developed by the best friend of the person you're talking to! It might have had a positive impact on a child. You just don't know.

Avoid giving negative opinions about other products, particularly the work of others. You may be asked to give an opinion about a service someone is providing. In responding, keep in mind that the opinion you give may be used to affirm – either positively or negatively – that person's belief. Don't allow yourself to become involved in controversies and/or situations that may become awkward for you.

Many people have been working hard to make the "children's agenda" a national agenda in a serious way. Now that this is beginning, we don't want to get into arguments about which program is better or who is best.

However, don't hesitate to speak positively about quality programs. By promoting the work of others, you're focusing on the bigger issue of the children's agenda. No one program is more important than that. If there are well-established programs that are doing good work related to ELC, promote them.

Marketing Point Ten

Expect ELC to be modified

Each workshop leader has a personal approach to early learning based on such things as experiences, training, interests, priorities, teaching approaches. As people begin to use ELC, they will also personalize it and go beyond the contents in the text. If, for example, you're conducting workshops with parents who are attending university, they may want to discuss issues from a research perspective. If your audience has a low literacy level, the approach to the written materials may need to be modified. Some will use parts of ELC as stand-alone information, others will incorporate it into their own program, still others may use the whole ELC program and add to it.

While modifications will be more dramatic at the participant level, workshop leader trainers need to be sensitive to the group they are dealing with during training. Each workshop group has a "personality" and it is essential that workshop leaders immediately "tune in" to the group and be ready to make small modifications to the training if required.

Marketing Point Eleven

ELC is a "speciality store," not a supermarket

ELC should not be marketed as being all things to all people. Market the program as doing certain things well but don't promote it as a cure-all. Base your marketing on what we know the program can do. Don't go beyond these boundaries.

The way to market a "speciality store" is to be knowledgeable about the specific items you have. This means that it is essential to have a knowledge of the philosophy of ELC – as expressed in the ELC principles.

Marketing Point Twelve

Focus on your present situation, not on what may happen in the future

Develop and implement marketing strategies based on present realities, not on prediction. Things are changing quickly in the area of children's services and our knowledge about child development. It is important to concentrate on the present product and its status in the marketplace as it is now, not on what it may become in the future.

Marketing Point Thirteen

Celebrate, but don't be complacent

Take time to celebrate your successes and congratulate yourself. But don't rest on your laurels. The importance of continued marketing and promoting ELC is a never-ending reality. Each ELC experience is an opportunity to enhance your marketing strategy. Remember, the next ELC audience is always new.

You may not always succeed. Some marketing plans do not work, not for lack of trying but because they failed to capture the interest of the intended audience.

Go back immediately to what worked well. Usually, only a few things missed the mark. Analyse the situation so you can move forward quickly with a revised plan.

Marketing Point Fourteen

You are an ELC ambassador

When you are wearing an ELC hat, you represent the CCCF, LRPALS and other organizations that collaborated in putting this program together – Canadian Association of Family Resource Programs, Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, and Learning Disabilities Association of Canada.

People's opinion of you has an impact on the credibility of ELC. You're a walking, talking billboard for ELC. The people you are training to be workshop leaders will be, too. Whether they realize it or not, they'll be watching you and be guided by your example.

Developing Specific Marketing Plans/Strategies for Workshops

1. Think AIDA - Attention, Information, Desire, Action

This simple formula helps in every promotion strategy. You need to grab someone's attention, give them information, satisfy a desire and ask them to take some form of action. The tricky part is to do it in a non-threatening way, without being pushy. Don't promise something the program can't deliver. And never use the word "should."

Attention

How you attract someone's attention depends on the vehicle you're using to communicate your message. In print, it's a bright, bold headline. In person, it's your enthusiasm. The information you give will depend on your audience and their needs, but it will usually answer "Who," "What," "Where," "When" and "Why."

Information

The information you provide should help your audience determine if the ELC workshop will satisfy their needs. In regular conversation, provide the basic information. If possible, try to determine what aspect of the program would interest your listener and include detail about that. In print, as part of your marketing plan, you are able to predetermine and predict what information and details may be of interest.

Desire

Advertisers try to "create" a desire. Arrange conditions so that your audience's desires and needs are satisfied. By presenting your message about ELC Workshop Leader Training – both verbally and visually – in a positive, non-threatening and interesting way, **focused on the program's benefits**, you'll be well on your way to satisfying a person's desire.

Action

Remember to ask people to take action. If you don't ask someone to call for more information, send a registration form or decide to attend the training, you haven't done the complete job! Invite them verbally or in print. Be sure to tell them how to take action – always include a phone number, fax number, email address, contact name and address. Determine the promotion vehicle.

2. Know your audience

You know your audience. You know how to use AIDA. Now you need to decide how you're going to promote your workshops. Following is a list of potential vehicles for promoting the training:

- personal contacts and word of mouth
- posters
- letters
- brochures
- newsletters
- press releases
- radio
- cable TV
- newspapers
- Web sites
- public presentations

3. Get sponsors and promotion partners

Look for ways to spread the word about ELC and the workshops through partners and existing communication vehicles. Examples are:

- A local service club may sponsor the cost of refreshments.
- A local early childhood educators' association has contact with parents and organizations.
- School councils have parents and a direct contact to the school.
- The school system is becoming increasingly interested in early learning and is often willing to participate.

- Different departments of health and social services have a mandate for health and well-being of children and families.
- Service organizations and community organizations have members, money and facilities.
- Businesses have resources and often facilities.
- Churches have facilities.

Most organizations already have mailing lists for members and other community groups and/or a newsletter distributed on a regular basis. Ask if they would include a flyer or a short information blurb about your workshop.

4. Seek the resources of LRPALS, CCCF and others who have done workshops

Many people are involved with ELC who will share their marketing knowledge, tools and experiences. Draw on this expertise. You will save yourself a great deal of time and produce better marketing strategies if you draw on the work of others. Keep a record of relevant names, addresses, Web pages, materials, etc. that you think will be of value to you for future use.

5. Thank yourself

Keep reminding yourself that you are giving a gift to the community! You are involved with ELC because of the personal commitment and motivation you have to make a difference in the lives of children and families.

You may feel discouraged if everything you plan does not work out. This is natural, but don't dwell on what didn't meet your expectations. **Learn from it and celebrate all the success you have had.** Give yourself a pat on the back!

Facilitating Workshop Leader Training

The challenge of ELC Workshop Leader Training is to give workshop leaders, in the short time available, an understanding of the program without overwhelming them with the content.

Workshop Leader Training models how to present the program to parents. It is not designed to teach workshop leaders the content of the program. It is expected that those who take the training are already familiar with most of what is covered in the *Participant Resource*.

The agenda for Workshop Leader Training has been field tested nine times. Each time some refinements were made.

It is expected that all the training content will be covered. This is accomplished during the 14 hours of training by concentrating on demonstrating how to present the program, through modelling and hands-on involvement in practising the presentation. The assumption is that workshop leaders have sufficient expertise to work with the content on their own.

Order of Workshop Agenda Items

SECTION 1

Building Group Capacity (about 4.5 hours)

Gathering Information: 60 minutes

In the first hour, you will become acquainted with the workshop leaders, and they will get to know each other as well. This hour will also engage people in activities from the very beginning.

1. Where I'm From
Have a map of your province, region or community, whichever is appropriate. Ask people to put a coloured dot or some other indicator on their hometown.

2. Name Tags
When workshop leaders arrive, give them a name tag. Name tags are important. We prefer to use first names.

3. My Profile
Building teams is essential to the success of the Workshop Leader Training. People will form teams within the first several hours of training. To assist in this process, provide workshop leaders with a personal profile sheet. (See Resources and Handouts.)

Included on the personal profile sheet is a place for a picture. If possible, have a Polaroid camera to take participants' photos. If one is not available, use a regular camera and have the film developed at a one-hour photo lab. LRPALS will pay the cost because they have asked to have the profiles sent to them after the training is finished.

Provide workshop leaders with a plastic cover to protect their personal profile sheet. Later, once teams have been formed, put the profiles on the walls (with their team symbol, described on p. 25).

4. Workshop Leader Contact Information
Ask workshop leaders to fill in the contact information form. (See Resources and Handouts.) Please ask workshop leaders to ensure that the information is complete and readable. People will be disappointed if they cannot be contacted because of address errors.

If possible, photocopy the completed sheets, and share with all workshop leaders. This information gives people the opportunity to communicate after the workshop.

Also send copies of these contact information sheets to CCCF and LRPALS.

5. Ordering Resources
An ELC Order Form (see Resources and Handouts) has been included for your convenience. Please order **at least 6 weeks in advance** of the Workshop Leader Training.

6. Agenda
Provide workshop leaders with the appropriate agenda (Option 1 or Option 2) for the training session. (See Resources and Handouts.) Review it quickly with the group to give them an overview of what to expect.

Forming Teams for the Workshop: 60 minutes

1. Invite workshop leaders to form teams of five or six people. Make two requests:
    - Ask workshop leaders who will be presenting the ELC program together in the same community to stay together.
    - Ask workshop leaders (singles or pairs) to sit with those they don't know, wherever possible.

2. Ask individuals in each team to introduce themselves to each other. Suggest that they talk about where they live, where they work, their experiences with young children, family, etc.

3. Ask each group to choose a **team** name. The word "team" is a matter of choice. If there is another term that the group would prefer to use to denote "belonging to a close, cooperative group," feel free to use it. Choosing a symbol is an important part of the team formation. Workshop leaders in each group discuss the choice of a team symbol and a name based on what they have just shared about themselves.

4. After a team name and symbol have been chosen, ask each group to draw their symbol on chart paper. Inside the symbol, have them write down what is common about the group. Outside the symbol, but still attached in some way, have them write the names of team members and three things that are unique about each individual.

    Each team will create a unique symbol. Here is an example: The team names itself "The Independents." They draw a big cat. Attached in different ways to the big cat are kittens. On the big cat, the team writes its common attributes. On each kitten, they write the attributes of individual members.

    Ask each team to place its symbol on a wall close to where they are sitting (if possible). Team members arrange their personal profiles around the team symbol. This enables participants to easily remember each other's names and team membership.

5. Each team creates a song, chant or poem that reflects who they are. Everyone on the team participates in this activity.

Completing the above activities will take about 30 minutes.

6. When the above activities have been completed, one member is selected to introduce their team. This person explains the team's symbol, what is common about the team and briefly what is unique about each team member. The team then recites, sings, etc. the message that identifies them.

Becoming Familiar with the Participant Resource (white pages) in the Workshop Leader Guide: 60 minutes

As stated earlier, there is little time spent covering the material in the *Participant Resource*.

1. Pass out the *Workshop Leader Guide*. If possible, send the *Workshop Leader Guide* to workshop leaders in advance of training so they can become familiar with it. Briefly explain that the green pages contain the "how to present the program" components. However, they will be concentrating on reviewing the white pages which are the *Participant Resource* part of the guide.

2. Ask workshop leaders to turn to the Contents page.

   Show workshop leaders that while there are lots of topics, there are only five categories:

   - **Understanding Learning**
     Modules One and Two
   - **Process of Thinking**
     Modules Three and Four
   - **Language Development**
     Modules Five and Six
   - **Health and Learning**
     Module Seven
   - **A Framework for Learning**
     Module Eight

3. Explain that there are also 10 Life Management topics that most parents with young children like to talk about, grouped in the section called "Life Management." Ask them to go to this section at the end of the book (page 147). Look at the drawings relating to the topics. Workshop leaders get a chuckle from each drawing which sets the stage for the parent-friendly approach the program takes. The workshop leaders will use these as ice breakers at the beginning of each module.

4. Select three or four topics at random. Review the format of each topic by referring to the headings in each topic (but do not cover any content). This process will allow workshop leaders to see that the format for each topic is the same.

5. Pass out the Becoming Familiar with the *Participant Resource* worksheet. (See Resources and Handouts.) Ask workshop leaders to select three topics that interest them and read the materials. Next, ask them to select three activities, not necessarily from the same topics, and read them.

This assignment is an essential part of the training so workshop leaders can become familiar with the *Participant Resource* (white pages). Ask workshop leaders to complete the assignment after the first session. If time permits, it is a good idea to get them started on this activity. This way, you can move directly into the next session with no delays. If the training is being offered in a full-day format, adjust your session to leave about an hour for participant review and the following activity.

ACTIVITY
Sharing Information About the Participant Resource (white pages): 30 minutes

The team shares what it has discovered from reviewing the *Participant Resource*.

This session is informal. Little or no trainer involvement is required unless it is requested. However, it is important that you approach each team occasionally, asking "How are things going?" Most of the time people will say "fine" and you move on. There will be times, however, when people have questions.

Ask team members what they liked about the *Participant Resource*. Ask them to write these responses on chart paper and post them in a central location as there will not be time to go over each one individually. We recommend that you take the time to categorize the

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Whole Group Introductions:
60 minutes

It is important for people to have the opportunity to hear from each member of the entire group. Although there are different ways to do this, the following activity is suggested. This activity is a fun ice breaker for workshop leaders, and helps them get to know each other.

ACTIVITY
Dream Catcher

- Ask workshop leaders to sit in a circle. Set out only as many chairs as there are people.
- Have a large ball of yarn. Explain that one person will begin the introductions while holding the ball of yarn.
- This introduction is an opportunity (allow a minute each) for workshop leaders to describe their role and experiences with young children and families.
- When the first workshop leader has finished the introduction, this person holds on to the end of the ball of yarn and tosses it to the person who volunteers to be next. The process is then repeated until every workshop leader has introduced themselves.

By the time the activity has been completed, the group has created a "dream catcher." This dream catcher can be a metaphor for working together during the training. It also can be a metaphor for their dreams for children, families and themselves.

SECTION 2

Philosophy of Early Learning Canada (about 1.5 hours)

Understanding That People Bring Resources to Each Task: about 45 minutes

ELC is a resource-based program. People are seen as resources to themselves and others. The goal of the program is to focus on what parents can do to enhance their child's learning, not what they can't do.

Provide workshop leaders with the ELC Parent Resource Graph they can give to parents as a self-assessment. (See Resources and Handouts.) It emphasizes that parents are resources to their children's learning and that many of the things they are doing with their children now are opportunities for their child to learn.

Some participants may feel that they are doing little in a particular area, but because the terms "minimum" and "maximum" are used for each rating, there is no zero for any question. This sheet also provides an opportunity for parents to realize that there may be things they could easily do with their child but haven't done because they didn't see them as being important.

Hand out the sheet entitled ELC Workshop Leader Resource Graph. It contains questions pertaining to the role of workshop leaders. (See Resources and

Handouts.) When workshop leaders have finished filling out this sheet, have an informal discussion.

Give workshop leaders a copy of the blank ELC Resource Graph for their own use. (See Resources and Handouts.) They can fill in their own questions depending on the people they are working with.

Enhancing the Meaning of the Early Learning Canada Principles: about 45 minutes

One of the things ELC wants to emphasize is that parents are the primary resource to their children. The following is a short team activity on the ELC principles which you have displayed on the wall.

ACTIVITY
ELC Principles

Assign one of the following to each team. It may be necessary due to the number of teams to assign the same principle to several teams.

Principle #1. Parents have an essential role in their children's lifelong learning.
- What is "lifelong learning?"
- What do you see as parents' role in lifelong learning?

Principle #2. Parents are the primary educators of their young children.
- Talk about the ways in which parents are the primary educators of their children.
- Think about...
  - when does learning start?
  - the influence of parents
  - the idea of parent as "teacher"

Principle #3. Parents have the capacity to educate their young children.
- Develop a list of questions you could ask parents to help them recognize the resources they already have to educate their young child.

Principle #4. Parents are not alone as their children's primary teacher, because the whole community has responsibilities for raising children.
- List some of the ways your communities are practising Principle #4.

When they have finished, have a member of each team report its findings.

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SECTION 3

Explaining the Five Step Method (about 1 hour)

Remember, the goal of the Workshop Leader Training is not to teach the content of the program. It is to provide a presentation framework that can be applied to each module and each topic.

Presenting the ELC program is based on the following practices:
- Parents are considered a resource to themselves, their children and other parents in the course.
- Each module is presented in a consistent manner.
- Workshop leaders have a primary role of facilitator, not instructor. Facilitators ask questions. They guide, often from a distance.
- Most of the time is spent having parents learn from one another.
- There are no tests.
- Most of the reading about the topics is done by the parent at home.

What you will cover:
- The ELC Five Step method of facilitating
- Experiencing Learning Cycle
- Cycle #1 of Module One (Understanding Learning)
- Topic 30 of Module Six

What workshop leaders will teach each other:
- Cycle #2 or Cycle #3 of Module One

Working in their teams, workshop leaders decide which cycles to review for the next day. In Module One, there are three cycles, one of which you have covered. Teams have a choice of selecting either one of the remaining two cycles. They will present these to their team only the next day. They will be expected to prepare that evening for their part of the presentation.

The Five Steps Used to Present Early Learning Canada Program Modules

Display the Five Step poster on the wall. (See Resources and Handouts.) Read the titles but do not explain each step now.

Use Module One in the *Workshop Leader Guide* (green page 1:2) as your reference.

Step 1: Share Learning Experiences
The purpose of this step is to have parents share real-life experiences that relate to topics they covered the previous week. Just inviting parents to talk about what they did last week may not generate enough discussion. To overcome this, we ask parents to do a Parent Weekly Assignment. (See Resources and Handouts.) The assignment also enhances their understanding of the topics and provides practice time for them to use the topics and activities in the *Participant Resource*.

Parents do the assignment during the week, before the next session. This is a "fun" assignment. No check-up is made at the next session, so no one is ever singled out. People who have difficulty reading can usually read materials written at the ELC level if they have the time to do so without any pressure. If they can't, they may have a family member or friend who can read the information to them.

Those who have difficulty with reading can often understand what has been written if it is presented in an appropriate format. Reinforce the point that even if parents do not like reading, they can still teach their children how to learn. Listening and talking are as important as reading for children to learn.

Step 2: Discuss Life Management Topic

The reason for covering a topic from the Life Management section at the beginning of a session is to provide an opportunity for informally sharing experiences parents have had with their children before covering the module topics.

It is important to note that only 15 minutes can be allotted to the Life Management topic at each session – a tight schedule is required to cover the module.

Step 3: Introduce Topics and Related Learning Activities

This is a quick step. Ask the workshop leaders to turn to the beginning of the module their team has chosen. Read out loud the information that is on the page. It provides a quick overview of the module and lists the topics that will be covered.

Step 4: Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

The whole ELC program is based on the Experiencing Learning Cycle. Workshop leaders have to be **really** familiar with it.

Briefing

The *Workshop Leader Guide* explains the briefing to parents. Remember, the goal of Briefing is to introduce the concept.

The definition, examples and key messages make a connection between what is written and parents' real-life experiences – that is, connecting their prior knowledge to what is written. As you do the briefing, we recommend that you ask, "Can someone give me an example from your own experiences that relates to this topic?" You will often find several people will volunteer.

Learning Activity

The *Workshop Leader Guide* covers how to present the activity. Remind workshop leaders that they will always be adapting the activity in the guide according to their situation and experience.

Note that parents participating in the ELC program will look at the information through the "filter" of the activity they have just completed.

You may have time before the debriefing to have workshop leaders go to the *Participant Resource* (white pages) and read the information that has been presented at the briefing.

Debriefing

There are three prompts to use for Debriefing:

- What do you feel and think about the experience (i.e. the activity)?
- Why are the topics important for children's learning development?
- How can you apply the topics with children?

Debriefing is a time to bring things together. This section of the Experiencing Learning Cycle is "participant turf." It is a time for open discussion about the topics. It is a time when parents can personalize what has been covered in the activity by relating it to their own lives.

Workshop leaders can expect that discussions may get off track and this is acceptable if they don't take too much time.

When you have finished explaining the above steps, use the green pages of the *Workshop Leader Guide* for several other modules to demonstrate that the Five Step method is the same for each module.

Step 5: Making the Most of the *Participant Resource*

Take just a few minutes to talk about the *Participant Resource*. Help parents to become familiar with the book so they will be comfortable using it. Select one of the topics related to an activity that the parents have done, and read and discuss the information and activities in the book. Workshop leaders' modelling can be transferred to parents' use of the *Participant Resource* at home.

SECTION 4

Modelling How to Lead a Module (about 1.5 hours)

Modelling Module One, Cycle #1

Model how to present the program by doing Cycle #1 of Module One with the workshop leaders playing the role of parents. It is all laid out for you in the green pages of the *Workshop Leader Guide* (pp. 1:2–1:5).

Have workshop leaders follow along in the *Workshop Leader Guide* (green and white pages) as you model the cycle. Strongly suggest to them that they make notes as the training takes place. You may want to note that people forget up to 80 percent of what they hear and see within a week. However, with personalized notes, recall can be greatly enhanced.

While modelling this cycle, you will probably find that the Briefing and the Learning Activity are fun for the workshop leaders. Many of them will relate to the activity as both a parent and a professional. However, during the Debriefing, they may find it difficult to play the role of parent because of their prior knowledge as "experts." During the Debriefing, ask them to remain in their professional role and discuss how they think parents might respond and what they would do as a workshop leader.

SECTION 5

Practising a Module (about 3 hours)

Preparing: 60 minutes

Workshop leaders work as a team and teach one of the cycles to each other.

Ask the teams to select one of the two remaining cycles in Module One. Each team member is to select one of the Five Steps and prepare to present that part of the module to their team.

Remind workshop leaders that Step Four has several components. Ask them to divide the Briefing, Learning Activity and Debriefing among the team.

Steps 1, 2 and 3 are only covered once in a module. You have already done these steps when you modelled Cycle #1. It is important that workshop leaders also have the experience of doing these steps themselves, so you would like them to do Cycle #2 or #3 to practise.

Leading: 1.5 hours

Teams meet and immediately begin presenting the module. Expect that people will be prepared and start immediately. This section of the training is the most powerful learning for workshop leaders because they are actually doing it themselves.

Team members will be supportive and engage in all kinds of dialogue. Your role is to be available to answer any questions. Observe occasionally what is taking place. Do not stay long with any team unless they have questions. You do not want to disrupt the flow of the group activity.

Debriefing: 30 minutes

Bring the teams together to Debrief and share their experiences. It is a time for celebration as workshop leaders will be feeling very positive about this experience.

SECTION 6

Modelling the Learning Activity for Topic 26 (about 30 minutes)

The Learning Activity for Topic 26, "Put Yourself in Their Shoes" (green pages, p. 5:4) requires explanation and modelling. It is designed to give parents an overview of how language naturally develops, while providing information about the purpose of language and its main components.

- Read the explanation of the activity on page 5:4 to become familiar with what is suggested.
- See Resources and Handouts for an example of the suggested format of the chart.
- Reread the information on page 77 (white pages) as you will be using these terms in the second part of the activity.

Note: You may make the chart on a large chalkboard or large pieces of chart paper or Bristol board. These could be taped together or left as separate sections, depending on what is most convenient and effective in your situation. It is important that the end result resembles the sample in Resources and Handouts so the group is able to see the flow and progression of language as it develops from one stage to the next.

How each section is filled in depends somewhat on the experiences of the participants. If there are no participants who have experiences with children of a certain age group, the workshop leader may have to extensively prompt people or fill in the section. Examples of possible responses from parents are provided so you will know what to expect, or to prompt if you need to. (See Resources and Handouts.)

When the activity is completed, participants will have a chart that demonstrates the growth in language that occurs over an 8-year period. Remind workshop leaders that the ages are not cast in stone, but are benchmarks that can be applied to the total population. Refer to an "age range" rather than a specific age and point out that children's normal language development usually falls within a wide range.

As is explained on page 5:4, use the examples on your chart to demonstrate the four main components of language. The purpose is to give participants an awareness of these concepts rather than expecting that parents' responses will exactly correspond to the definition of each component.

Have the four terms – "phonology," "semantics," "syntactics" and "pragmatics" – printed on large cards. As you discuss the responses on the chart with the participants, tape each card to the appropriate section on the chart.

Examples:

1. When a child is using babbles, making rhymes or playing with words, the child is developing phonology. Tape up the phonology card.

2. When a child is beginning to express needs ("I want," etc.), the child is beginning to understand the meaning of language. Tape up the semantics card.

3. When a child is using phrases such as "Me see cat" or "John go home," the child is beginning to use syntax. Discuss how the child's use of syntax becomes more sophisticated as he or she gets older. Tape up the syntax card.

4. When a child begins to use different language with different people (to tell jokes, negotiate, etc.), the child is demonstrating pragmatics. Tape up the pragmatics card.

If participants have questions about their child's progress in language, the best response is to suggest that they see a professional to diagnose their child's speech.

SECTION 7

Evaluations and Workshop Logistics (about 1.5 hours)

Evaluations (30 minutes)

ELC Workshop Leader Evaluation Form

(see Resources and Handouts)

Workshop leaders are asked to fill out an evaluation at the conclusion of their training session. These evaluations give the essential feedback that you need to assess how the training went. It can give you insight on how to adjust your facilitation style. It can also provide assurance that your approach is working. The authors of the program have used this feedback to improve their training techniques. Be sure to leave at least 20 minutes at the end of your training session to allow each workshop leader to complete this evaluation.

ELC Participant Evaluation Form

(see Resources and Handouts)

These evaluations are sent out with the material orders that the workshop leaders place before facilitating their community workshop series. They are to be filled out by the parents and other community members who attend the series. Advise workshop leaders to allow at least 20 minutes at the end of the last meeting for the participants to fill out this evaluation. The workshop leaders will learn a lot about how they connected with their participants from the information on this evaluation.

ELC Workshop Leader Feedback Form

(see Resources and Handouts)

This form is to be filled out by each workshop leader after facilitating the community workshop series. The form is also sent with the material order that the workshop leader made before the community series. It allows the leader to reflect on how the series went. All feedback from the leaders is relevant and important to the creators of the program.

Workshop Logistics (45 minutes)

Distribute the ELC Workshop Leader Handout (see Resources and Handouts) when you give out the *Workshop Leader Guide*. It advises the workshop leader what steps need to be taken to organize a community workshop series. Any questions or concerns regarding the ordering of the resources should be directed to CCCF, 1 800 858-1412 x 224.

Finding Potential Workshop Leaders

For the first call-out for workshop leaders, CCCF placed an ad in its quarterly publication, *Interaction*. Information about ELC was also distributed throughout the networks of other partners on the project. The number of people wanting to attend the training far exceeded the amount of spaces available. A waiting list was created so we would not lose these keen learners. In the project pilot, ELC trainers were given these names. You may also have people in your community already interested in becoming a workshop leader and that's great. It may happen that you too will have an overwhelming response when you offer your training opportunity. If this occurs, we suggest creating a waiting list and connecting with your fellow trainers. There may be an opportunity for them to be trained elsewhere.

Concluding Your Training Session

To provide closure, end your session by allowing each workshop leader to share some thoughts on how prepared they feel they are to facilitate ELC. This will allow some leaders the opportunity to bring up any apprehension they may feel. The group of supportive workshop leaders and trainers can then provide encouragement and concrete ideas about conducting the community workshop series.

As a last activity, have each leader return to his or her team. Once in the group, each will write his or her name on a piece of paper. Put all pieces in a hat. Each workshop leader will pull a name out of the hat. If it is his or her own, that person must trade it with another person. The leader must then write a positive note to that person, describing how they felt about having the opportunity to spend time with them. This is a powerful and positive note on which to end your training session. Everyone walks away feeling good about themselves. Many will keep the note and place it where they can read it often.

SECTION 8

Conclusion (15 minutes)

With your training complete, you are now ready to facilitate a Workshop Leader Training session. You are equipped with all of the skills necessary to advise and model how the ELC Program can be of benefit to families with young children. If you have any concerns or questions, please contact LRPALS.

Learning and Reading Partners
179 Queen Street
Charlottetown, PEI
C1A 7N5
Tel: (902) 892-2930
Fax: (902) 628-8178
Email: lrpals@auracom.com

www.cfc-efc.ca/cccf

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201-383 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4R4
Tel: (613) 729-5289, 1 800 858-1412 Fax: (613) 729-3159 Email: cccf@cfc-efc.ca

Membership Application

(please print)

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Organization/Program ____

Address ____

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Yes, I/We support the mission of the Canadian Child Care Federation (to improve the quality of child care services for Canadian families) and wish to join.
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name of the training institution

☐ Subscription to *Interaction* $40 (applicable to non-members only) ☐ Donation $__________

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* For agencies, child care centres, resource centres and interested groups of 20 or fewer.

**For training institutions, provincial organizations and other organizations with 20 members or more.

Send to: 201-383 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4R4 Tel: (613) 729-5289, 1 800 858-1412 Fax: (613) 729-3159 Email: cccf@cfc-efc.ca

Canadian Child Care Directory

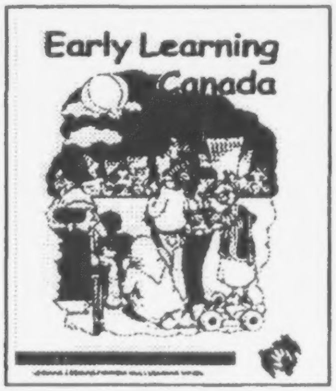
(2001)

This colour-coded document offers contact information on federal, provincial and territorial government child care offices, national organizations working with children and families, provincial and territorial child care organizations (organized by province/ territory), and education and training institutions across the country.

$10 members

$20 non-members

Early Learning Canada *(2000)*



Early Learning Canada is a literacy/healthy child development program designed for parents and other adults working with young children from birth to age 6 and their families.

Workshop Leader Guide	$30 each
Workshop Leader Posters *(set of 4)*	$10 set
Participant Resource	$20 each
Trainer Manual	$10 each
Participant Certificates *(set of 15)*	$10 set
Participant Evaluations	*free of charge*
T-shirts *(adult or extra large)*	$10 each

Family Child Care Training Program: Level 1 *(2000)*

The program consists of twelve units developed for people working in the family child care field, in the regulated and unregulated sectors, or for those interested in becoming providers. Each unit includes: Learning Objectives, The Basics, Activities, Chatter Boxes, For More Information, and Evaluation.

$12 each
$10 each for more than 10 copies

FAMILY CHILD CARE TRAINING PROGRAM
1

Information Kits:

- Home-Based Child Care
- Centre-Based Child Care
- Quality Child Care

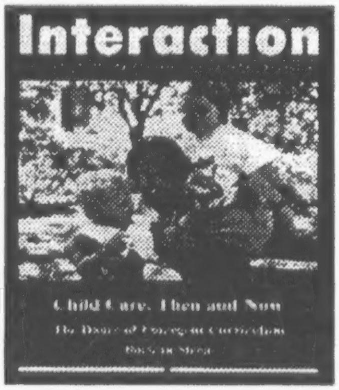
$15 each/members
$25 each/non-members

Interaction – Back Issues *(1999-2001)*

A membership benefit, *Interaction* is the quarterly billingual magazine of the Canadian Child Care Federation. Each issue includes a focus section; an opinions section; a practice section and a news section (Research Update, Across Canada, Calendar and Resources).

$10 each

Please specify the issue number.


Interaction
Child Care, Then and Now

Interaction
INDEX - NAME, TITLE, SUBJECT
Fall 1987 to Summer 1999

Interaction – Index *(1987-1999)*

Looking for a specific article or an article on a particular aspect of child care?

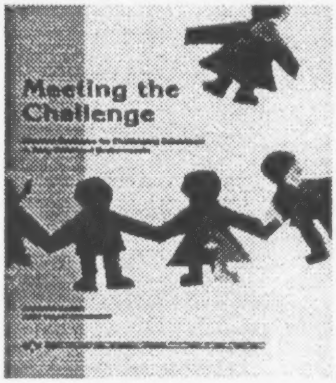
Make the *Interaction* index part of your resource set.

All items published in *Interaction* are annually indexed by author, subject and title.

$10 members

$20 non-members

Meeting the Challenge: Effective Strategies for Challenging Behaviours in Early Childhood Environments *(1999)*

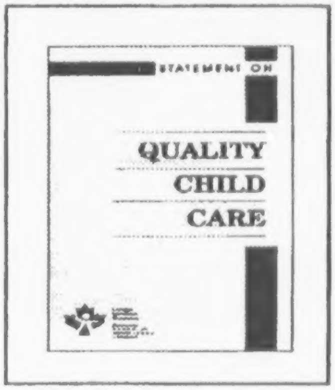

Meeting the Challenge

This user-friendly attractive, 40-page publication, teaches adults who work with young children and their families how to provide the effective early intervention that researchers see as key.

$10 each

$8 each for more than 10 copies

Facilitators Guide $10 each


STATEMENT ON
QUALITY
CHILD
CARE

National Statement on Quality Child Care *(1994)*

The document is divided in two sections: centre-based and family-based child care. Each section includes seven areas with specific indicators of quality child care.

$5 each

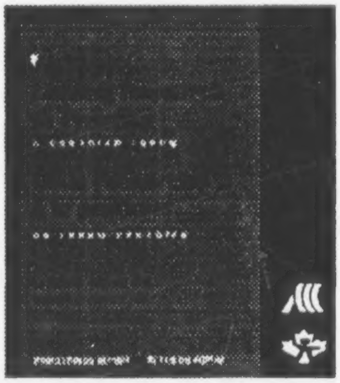
Partners in Quality *(1999-2000)*

The bilingual series is intended to support practitioners in the child care field and to enhance the dialogue within communities on the importance of quality child care environments.

- Issues
- Relationships
- Infrastructure
- Communities
- Tools for Practitioners in Child Care Settings
- Tools for Administrators in Child Care Settings

$5 each *Please specify the volume.*

Partners in Quality
1
Issues



Proceedings Reports
Linking Research to Practice Forum

- A Canadian Forum October 25-27, 1998
- Second Canadian Forum November 25-27, 1999
- Third Canadian Forum November 22-24, 2001 (available in 2002)

$30 each *Please specify the year.*

Quality Child Care:
In Search of a Definition

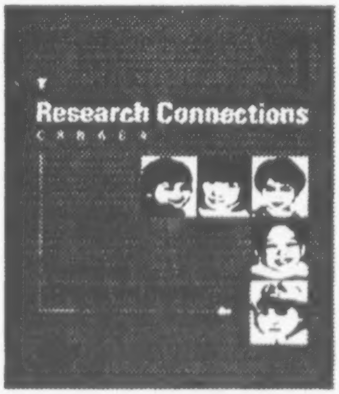
(1991) Video (16:30 minutes)

The video is designed to highlight the components of quality in the delivery of child care services.

$20 members
$40 non-members

Research Connections Canada:
Supporting Children and Families

(1999-2001)

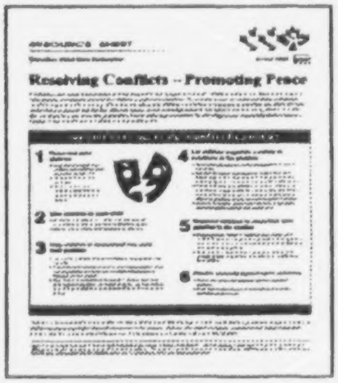


Research Connections Canada is a bilingual, 7- volume publication series, that is an anthology of currrent Canadian early childhood research and development papers. The series is of particular interest to training programs (at both college and university levels), academics, researchers, policymakers and licensing and regulatory agencies.

$25 each *Please specify the volume.*

Resource Sheets

A bilingual resource sheet is included with each copy of the Federation's quarterly magazine, *Interaction*. Resource sheets are single page reviews of topics of particular interest to frontline child care practitioners and parents.


Resolving Conflicts – Promoting Peace

Individual sheet:
$2 each/members $4 each/non-members
Complete Set:
$25 members $50 non-members

Please specify the Resource Sheet # on the order form.

# 1	When a Child is Hospitalized
# 2	Parents as Partners in Reading
# 3	The Child's Rights in a Preschool Setting
# 4	Car Travel with Preschoolers
# 5	98 Ways To Say "Very Good"
# 6	I See! I Want!
# 7	How Well Do You Know Your Child?
# 8	Musical Playtime
# 9	Returning to Work with an Infant
# 10	Helping Children Understand Death
# 11	Healthy Habits Include Fitness
# 12	Video Literacy: A Challenge for Parents and Caregivers
# 13	Protecting Children: Helpful Rules to Keep Young People Safe
# 14	Recycling for Fun
# 15	Children and Creativity
# 16	Revenge on the Ninja Turtles
# 17	Home Alone
# 18	When Jack Frost Comes Nipping
# 19	Stress in Children
# 20	Sunshine – Approach with Caution
# 21	Safety in the Arts
# 22	Cooking and Learning Together
# 23	Developmentally Appropriate Practices in School-Age Child Care
# 24	Food Safety for Everyone
# 25	Seven Steps to Oral Hygiene for Children
# 26	Toy Safety
# 27	Ear Infections, Hearing Loss and Children
# 28	Water Safety
# 29	Toxic Plant List
# 30	Respecting the Children in Our Care
# 31	Encouraging Language Acquisition in Young Children
# 32	Playground Safety
# 33	HIV/AIDS and Child Care
# 34	Making a Quality Child Care Choice
# 35	Helping Children Respect and Appreciate Diversity
# 36	Helping Young Children Tell the Truth
# 37	Celebrate National Child Day – November 20
# 38	Communicating with a Child who has Special Needs
# 39	Managing the Television at Home
# 40	Babies and Toddlers Need Language Play Too
# 41	Coping with Separation Anxiety
# 42	Managing the Internet
# 43	Exploring Nature with Children
# 44	Comforting Your Young Child
# 45	Understanding Learning Styles
# 46	Making Active Choices Every Day
# 47	Polyvinyl Chloride Toys
# 48	Tips for Parenting Children with Challenging Behaviour
# 49	Teaching Children to Respect Dogs
# 50	Visit Child & Family Canada
# 51	Your Child's Relationships
# 52	Supporting your Child's Physical Activity
# 53	Not all Bugs are Created Equal: Use Antibiotics Wisely
# 54	Children's Healthy Eating
# 55	Resolving Conflicts – Promoting Peace
# 56	Early Identification for Children with Special Needs
# 57	Supporting Breastfeeding in Child Care

Towards Excellence in ECCE Training Programs *(1995)*

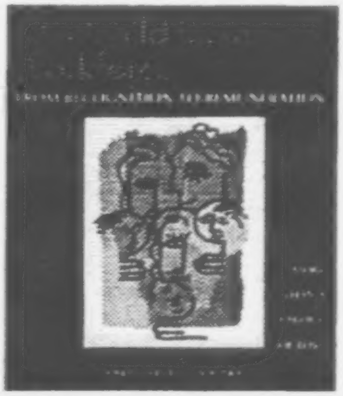
The document includes two parts: the National Guidelines for Training in Early Childhood Care and Education; and a self-assessment tool based on these guidelines.

$10 members
$20 non-members

Our Child Care Workforce: From Recognition to Remuneration *(1998)*

- Main Report
- Executive Summary
- Parent Sheet
- Poster
- Selected Case Studies
- Literature Reveiw
- Promotion Guide
- Workshop Kit and Transparencies

$10 for the entire package
(one copy of each document)
$5 each



Providing Home Child Care for a Living *(1998)*

- A Survey of Providers Working in the Regulated Sector
- A Survey of Providers Working in the Unregulated Sector in their own Home
- A Survey of Providers Working in the Unregulated Sector in the Child's Home

$10 for the entire package
(one copy of each document)
$5 each

Visit our Websites!

www.cfc-efc.ca/cccf

Canadian
Child
Care
Federation

www.workfamilytips.com

Workfamilytips.com
families helping families

Balancing work and family is difficult.
This is a website for you to share what has worked for your family.

www.cfc-efc.ca

Child & Family
Canada

Fifty Canadian non-profit organizations have come together to provide quality, credible resources on children and families. The managing partner of the consortium is the Canadian Child Care Federation.

Canadian Child Care Federation   Canadian School Boards Association   Centre of Excellence for Early Childhood Development

LINKING
research to policy & practice
for children & youth

November 22-24, 2001
Ottawa, Ontario

Don't miss this exciting event!

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Order Form

Are you a member of the Canadian Child Care Federation? Yes No If yes, Membership Number ____________

or Name of Affiliate Organization ____

PRE-PAYMENT BY VISA, CHEQUE OR PURCHASE ORDER: PO # ____________________

PUBLICATION	QUANTITY	UNIT PRICE*	TOTAL

***All prices include shipping and handling – taxes exempt.**

Additional shipping costs apply outside Canada.

TOTAL PAYMENT ______________

Name/Contact person ____

Organization/Program ____

Address ____

______________________________ Postal Code ______________________

Tel. Home ______________________ Tel. Work ______________________

VISA # ______________________________ Exp. date ______________

Thank you!

BEST COPY AV

Send to: 201-383 Parkdale Ave., Ottawa, Ontario, K1Y 4R4 Tel: (613) 729-5289, 1 800 858-1412 Fax: (613) 729-3159 Email: cccf@cfc-efc.ca

ELC Workshop Leader Contact Information

Workshop Location ______________________ **Date** __________

Name______________________________ Involvement with young children
Work Address__________________________ ______________________________
__________________ Postal Code _______ ______________________________
Work Phone__________ Fax____________ ______________________________
Email_______________________ ______________________________

Name______________________________ Involvement with young children
Work Address__________________________ ______________________________
__________________ Postal Code _______ ______________________________
Work Phone__________ Fax____________ ______________________________
Email_______________________ ______________________________

Name______________________________ Involvement with young children
Work Address__________________________ ______________________________
__________________ Postal Code _______ ______________________________
Work Phone__________ Fax____________ ______________________________
Email_______________________ ______________________________

Name______________________________ Involvement with young children
Work Address__________________________ ______________________________
__________________ Postal Code _______ ______________________________
Work Phone__________ Fax____________ ______________________________
Email_______________________ ______________________________

Name______________________________ Involvement with young children
Work Address__________________________ ______________________________
__________________ Postal Code _______ ______________________________
Work Phone__________ Fax____________ ______________________________
Email_______________________ ______________________________

ELC Workshop Leader Training Agenda Overview

Section 1: Building Group Capacity

Gathering Information - 60 minutes
Forming Teams for the Workshop - 60 minutes
Becoming Familiar with the *Participant Resource* in the *Workshop Leader Guide* - 60 minutes
Sharing Information about the *Participant Resource* - 30 minutes
Whole Group Introductions - 60 minutes

Section 2: Philosophy of Early Learning Canada

Understanding That People Bring Resources to Each Task - 45 minutes
Enhancing the Meaning of the Early Learning Canada Principles - 45 minutes

Section 3: Explaining the Five Step Method - 60 minutes

Section 4: Modelling How to Lead a Module - 90 minutes

Section 5: Practising a Module

Preparing - 60 minutes
Leading - 90 minutes
Debriefing - 30 minutes

Section Six: Modelling the Learning Activity for Topic 26 - 30 minutes

Section Seven: Evaluations and Workshop Logistics

Evaluations - 30 minutes
Workshop Logistics - 45 minutes

Section 8: Conclusion - 15 minutes

ELC Workshop Leader Training Agenda

Option One

Evening	**(5:30 pm - 8:30 pm)**
5:30 - 6:30	Gathering Information Things to complete: • Name tags with symbol • Profile sheet with photo and symbol • Where I'm from (location on the map) • Contact information
6:30 - 7:30	Forming Teams for the Workshop
7:30 - 8:30	Becoming Familiar with the Participant Resource

Full Day	**(8:30 am - 4:30 pm)**
8:30 - 9:00	Sharing Information about the Participant Resource
9:00 - 10:00	Whole Group Introductions
10:00 - 10:30	**Break**
10:30 - 11:15	Understanding That People Bring Resources to Each Task
11:15 - 12:00	Enhancing the Meaning of the Early Learning Canada Principles
12:00 - 1:00	**Lunch**
1:00 - 2:00	Explaining the Five Step Method
2:00 - 3:30	Modelling How to Lead a Module
3:30 - 4:30	Preparing to Lead a Module

Morning	**(9:00 am - 1:00 pm)**
9:00 - 10:30	Leading a Module
10:30 - 11:00	Debriefing
11:00 - 11:30	Modelling the Learning Activity for Topic 26
11:30 - 12:00	Evaluations
12:00 - 12:45	Workshop Logistics
12:45 - 1:00	Conclusion

ELC Workshop Leader Training Agenda

Option Two

Full Day	**(8:30 am - 4:30 pm)**
8:30 - 9:30	Gathering Information
9:30 - 10:30	Forming Teams for the Workshop
10:30 - 11:30	Becoming Familiar with the Participant Resource
11:30 - 12:00	Sharing Information about the Participant Resource
12:00 - 1:00	**Lunch**
1: 00 - 2:00	Whole Group Introductions
2:00 - 2:45	Understanding That People Bring Resources to Each Task
2:45 - 3:30	Enhancing the Meaning of the ELC Principles
3:30 - 4:30	Explaining the Five Step Method

Full Day	**(8:30 am - 4:30 pm)**
8:30 - 10:00	Modelling How to Lead a Module
10:00 - 10:30	**Break**
10:30 - 11:30	Preparing to Lead a Module
11:30 - 12:30	**Lunch**
12:30 - 2:00	Leading a Module
2:00 - 2:30	Debriefing
2:30 - 3:00	Modelling the Learning Activity for Topic 26
3:00 - 3:30	Evaluations
3:30 - 4:15	Workshop Logistics
4:15 - 4:30	Conclusion

ELC Workshop Leader Personal Profile

Training Location____________________

Full name (Print name in large dark letters please.)

Where I live (Print in large dark letters please.)

My role (Print in large dark letters please.)

My picture	My symbol

Becoming Familiar with the *Participant Resource*

Workshop leaders already know much of the ELC content. For this reason, little time is spent covering the topics found in each module. Most of the time is spent learning how to teach the content. To do so effectively requires workshop leaders to be familiar with the *Participant Resource* which parents receive.

The *Workshop Leader Guide* has two components: green pages that provide strategies to teach each module and white pages which are the *Participant Resource* each parent receives.

Note that the *Workshop Leader Guide* cover has a green stripe; the *Participant Guide* has an orange stripe.

Exploring the *Participant Resource*:

1. Read the white pages only please.

2. Examine the inside of the front cover to see the partnerships, people involved and funding sources.

3. Take a look at the Reading List at the back to see the extensive references.

4. Read the Introduction on page 3 of the *Participant Resource*.

5. Go to the table of contents and see how the book is divided into modules with each module having a number of topics.

6. See that, while there are a lot of topics, the modules cover only five categories:
    - Understanding Learning
    - The Process of Thinking
    - Language Development
    - Health and Learning
    - A Framework for Learning

7. Select three topics from different sections of the book. See how each topic follows the same format. All topics have this format. Read the information. Be prepared to talk about these topics with your team members.

   1. ________________________ 2.__________________________ 3.________________________

8. The final section in each Topic gives an "Activity to do with children" or an "Activity for parents." Select three of these Activities that are of interest to you. They do not have to be from the Topics you have chosen under 7. Be prepared to talk about these activities with your team members.

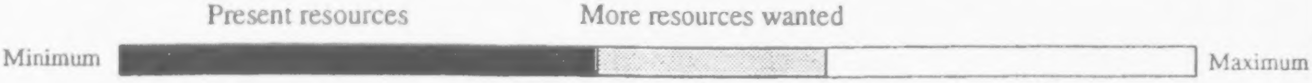
   1. ________________________ 2.__________________________ 3.________________________

9. Go to the Life Management section. Take a look at each of the topics and enjoy the art work! Read one of the Life Management topics. Be prepared to talk about this topic with your team members.

ELC Parent Resource Graph

Before I begin	• Shade in your present resources relating to each of the topics listed. (Use one colour.)
More resources wanted	• Shade in the graph if you would like more resources. (Use a second colour.)

Note** Expect to have few present resources in some of the topics because the material has not yet been covered.



What are my resources to:

Observe my child as she or he learns?

Minimum Maximum

Talk to my child?

Minimum Maximum

Read to my child?

Minimum Maximum

Assist my child to remain or become physically healthy?

Minimum Maximum

Play with my child?

Minimum Maximum

Take my child places?

Minimum Maximum

Allow my child to explore and discover on his or her own? (age appropriate)

Minimum Maximum

Teach my child to speak?

Minimum Maximum

Use thinking strategies with my child?

Minimum Maximum

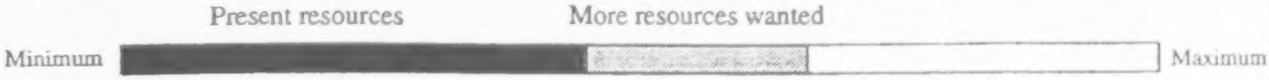
Accept my child as he or she is?

Minimum Maximum

ELC Workshop Leader Resource Graph

Before I begin • Shade in your present resources relating to each of the topics listed. (Use one colour.)
More resources wanted • Shade in the graph if you would like more resources. (Use a second colour.)

Note** Expect to have few present resources in some of the topics because the material has not yet been covered.



What are my resources to:

Understand adult learning?
Minimum Maximum

Work in small groups?
Minimum Maximum

Explain the four ELC principles?
Minimum Maximum

Help adults learn through mutisensory experiences?
Minimum Maximum

Get parents to take Early Learning Canada?
Minimum Maximum

Facilitate small group learning?
Minimum Maximum

Understand TALK as a metacognitive model that relates to all learning?
Minimum Maximum

Explain the PAT approach to parent involvement with their children's learning?
Minimum Maximum

Market the importance of child development as a major issue in Canada?
Minimum Maximum

Use the Early Learning Canada Experiencing Learning Cycle?
Minimum Maximum

Enhancing the Meaning of the Early Learning Canada Principles

With your team, please discuss the Early Learning Canada Principles by doing one of these activities:

Principle #1. Parents have an essential role in their children's lifelong learning.

- What is "lifelong learning"?
- What do you see as parents' role in "lifelong learning"?

Principle #2. Parents are the primary educators of their young children.

- Talk about the ways that parents are the primary educators of their children. Think about . . . .
  - when does learning start?
  - the influence of parents
  - the idea of parent as "teacher"

Principle #3. Parents have the capacity to educate their young children.

- Develop a list of questions you could ask parents to help them recognize the resources they already have to educate their young child.

Principle #4. Parents are not alone as their children's primary teacher, because the whole community has responsibilities for raising children.

- List some of the ways your communities are practising Principle #4.

ELC Resource Graph

Before I begin	• Shade in your present resources relating to each of the topics listed. (Use one colour.)
More resources wanted	• Shade in the graph if you would like more resources. (Use a second colour.)

Note** Expect to have few present resources in some of the topics because the material has not yet been covered.

Present resources More resources wanted

Minimum ■■■■■▨▨▨□□□ Maximum

What are my resources to:

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Minimum □ Maximum

Five Step Posters

1 - 5

1.

Share Learning Experiences

2.

Discuss Life Management Topic

3. Introduce Topics & Related Learning Activities

4.

Lead the Experiencing Learning Cycle

5. Make the Most of the Participant Resource

Parent Weekly Assignment

The success of Early Learning Canada is based on the use you make of the topics to assist your young children with learning.

Since using the information greatly increases understanding and motivation, we ask you to complete the following assignment between each session.

The assignment is your responsibility and there is no check-up or test by the workshop leader. However, you will have a chance to share what you have done in Step One, "Share Learning Experiences," when you share what happened the previous week.

Your assignment has four parts:

Part One Read the topics that have been covered.
There is not enough time during each workshop to discuss much of the specific content of the *Participant Resource.* During the week after your workshop, take some time to read the information in your book that was covered during the session. This is a good time to share the information with a spouse or neighbour.

Part Two Practise using topics that have been covered.
Practise using the topics that were covered in the session by integrating them with the usual activities you do with your young child. So, during bath time, you can enhance your child's learning, thinking, language and health, while having them explore, inquire, discover and make connections as they have fun in the water.

Part Three Do an activity from the *Participant Resource.*
Do at least one of the Activities from the topics you have covered.

Part Four Review the next module or topics that will be covered.
Preview the module or topics that will be taught in the next workshop. Doing this will make it easier to understand the Briefing for next week's topics.

	Infant	1 - 2 years	3 - 4 years	5 - 6 years	7- 8 years
Ways **children** **communicate**					
Why **children** **communicate**					
Actual **sounds,** **words, phrases** **and sentences** **children use** **to communicate**					

Topic 26: Learning Activity Model for Chart

	Infant	1 - 2 years	3 - 4 years	5 - 6 years	7- 8 years
Ways children communicate	• Cry (Screech) • Eye contact • Babble • Point • Smile	• One word • Label • Question • Phrases	• Play • Rhyme • Short stories • "I want" • Questions • Cry	• Express needs • Sentences • Stories • Conversation • Body language • Recognize print • Complex language	• Variety • Competent language • Body language • Sophisticated language • Written language
Why children communicate	• Get needs met • Express emotions	• Get needs met • Power • Learn • Express knowledge	• Get needs met • Express feelings • Enjoyment	• Acceptance • Get needs met • Feel connected • Negotiate	• Problem-solve • Stories, jokes • Curiosity • Play with language
Actual sounds, words, phrases and sentences children use to communicate	• "da - da - da" • "wa - wa" • "a - a"	• "No" • "Mine" • "Mommy" • "Me want that"	• "I want" • "No" • "I can do it" • "I don't like that" • "I love you."	• "You get the crayons, I'll be the teacher." • "She can have it if she gives me that."	• "I don't want to do my homework." • "Why is the sky blue?" • "I didn't do it." • "Let me tell you a story."

Topic 26: Learning Activity Model for Chart

Early Learning Canada
Workshop Leader Evaluation Form

1. Please comment on the quality of the training you received at this training session.

2. Please comment on the content of the Workshop Leader Guide. (Was it user friendly? Was it clear? Did it use appropriate language?)

3. How prepared do you feel to facilitate your community workshop series?

4. What else do you need to assist you in facilitating ELC?

5. Please comment on the content of the *Participant Resource*. (Was the text and meaning clear? Was an appropriate tone used in the writing?)

6. What part of the program was of most interest to you?

7. Other comments or advice for the trainers….

Thank you for your participation in Early Learning Canada
Please forward this completed form to the CCCF and LRPALS
Canadian Child Care Federation 201-383 Parkdale Ave. Ottawa, ON. K1Y 4R4 / LRPALS Box 1807 Charlottetown, PEI. C1A 7N5

Early Learning Canada
Participant Evaluation Form

City:________________Province:____________Date:________________
Workshop Leader's Names:____

As you fill out this questionnaire, parents please think of your own child; caregivers, please think of the children in your care.

1. How did you hear about Early Learning Canada?
____
____

2. Relationship to child(ren)
☐ family (mother / father / relative / other________________)
☐ caregiver (centrebased child care / home child care / other______________)

3. Child(ren)'s age(s)__________

4. Do you have a better understanding of your child after participating in this program?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

5. Has taking this program enhanced the learning relationship between you and your child?
☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Unsure

6. What differences, if any, do you see in your child(ren)'s learning?________________
____

Please rate the next four questions on a scale between 1 and 10, with 10 being the best.
7. Rate your confidence to help your child(ren) with learning before you took this program **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

8. Rate your confidence to help your child(ren) with learning and reading after you took this program **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

9. Rate your confidence in talking to other people involved in your child(ren)'s learning before taking this program **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

10. Rate your confidence in talking to other people involved in your child(ren)'s learning after taking this program **1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10**

11. What did you like best about the program?

12. Do you recommend any changes to the Participant Resource?

13. Describe the atmosphere of the community workshop that you participated in.

14. Was 20 hours an appropriate amount of time for the workshop series?

15. There is a lot of information in the program. Would you prefer:
☐ The same amount of information
☐ More information
☐ Less information
Why?

16. Would you prefer:
☐ The same amount of discussion
☐ More discussion
☐ Less discussion
Why?

17. If asked about this program, what would you say?

18. How has this program affected you? Would you recommend it to others?

19. Will you use the Participant Resource outside the workshop? Please comment.

20. Would you be willing to complete another questionnaire about ELC? If so, please PRINT your name and address and phone number below.

Thank you for your participation in Early Learning Canada
Please forward this completed form to the CCCF and LRPALS
Canadian Child Care Federation 201-383 Parkdale Ave. Ottawa, ON. K1Y 4R4 / LRPALS Box 1807 Charlottetown, PEI. C1A 7N5

Early Learning Canada
Workshop Leader Feedback Form

1. **Did the training that you received prepare you for presenting your community workshop series?**

☐ Yes
☐ No

2. **Were the participants at your community workshop responsive to the program?**

☐ Yes
☐ No

3. **Would you be interested in hosting another set of community workshops?**

☐ Yes
☐ No

4. **Approximately how much did your community workshop series cost to host?**

Name:______________________________ **Phone:**_______________________ **Fax:**__________________

Your Community Workshops were held in :________________________________**(city/province)**

Thank you for your participation in Early Learning Canada
Please forward this completed form to the CCCF and LRPALS
Canadian Child Care Federation 201-383 Parkdale Ave. Ottawa, ON. K1Y 4R4 / LRPALS Box 1807 Charlottetown, PEI C1A 7N5

Next Steps for the Trained ELC Workshop Leader

1) Promote your upcoming community workshop series.

2) Arrange logistics (ie. registration, room rental, etc.) for your community workshop series. You may want to approach a community sponsor to help cover some of the costs.

3) Complete and send in the order form to the Canadian Child Care Federation. Allow 6 weeks for delivery of the *Participant Resources*, participant certificates, posters and evaluation forms.

Congratulations! You are now ready to facilitate your very own Early Learning Canada community workshop series.

If you require any training support, please contact Learning and Reading Partners at 902-628-2930
email: lrpals@auracom.com

Canadian Child Care Federation
Suite 201, 383 Parkdale Avenue
Ottawa, Ontario K1Y 4R4
Phone: (613) 729-5289; 1 800 858-1412
Fax: (613) 729-3159; Email: cccf@cfc-efc.ca
www.cfc-efc.ca/cccf

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